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SHORT STORIES.

No. 701.] For the Week Ending June 7th, 1902. [ONE PENNY.

The Honeysuckle & the Bee

G. W. Hillingham

Telling of a Man, a Girl, and a Picture.

A MAN whistled it idly as he sat under the cliffs. He was a young man, with a careless, cynical face, and he didn't know in the least what he whistled, or that he whistled at all.

"You are the honeysuckle, I am the bee."

He sat back on his stool looking at a picture on the easel before him with an air of pleased satisfaction. He had succeeded! He drew a deep breath and touched his purple rocks and green sea with a loving, delicate brush. Here was the picture that would bring him fame at last—fame, and the woman he loved!

The sea on his canvas had all the look and strength and beauty of the sea before him. It was real! He felt an odd thrill as he looked at it, and realised that there was power in his brush that would make the men and women who looked at that picture feel, and breathe the sea he had painted, and he wondered if it would make Amy Reeves feel too.

He sighed a little and turned almost impatiently from the thought. At least she would feel that the picture would make him famous, and that was all she wanted. She had said she would marry him when he succeeded, and he *had* succeeded now. This picture would make him famous and in a few months time he would have everything he wanted, and the woman for whom he had worked would be his wife.

He leant back on his stool, his shoulders touching the grey cliffs behind him and his eyes looking out across the sea. They were fickle eyes, as many a woman knew, but Amy Reeves, the American heiress, was too clever a beauty to allow them to be fickle to her, and though she fully intended to let him marry her some day, she meant to make him work for her first.

He was thinking of her now as he looked out across the tossing white foam, but somehow between him and the sea, between him and Amy Reeves' brilliant dark eyes, was another face. It was such a delicate face that it seemed almost like a bit of foam itself and as if it might as easily melt away, and he wondered uncomfortably if he had been quite fair to the owner of that face.

A voice humming the same foolish, haunting air that he had whistled a moment ago, made him turn abruptly, to find a man coming down the cliff close behind him. He was a young man and an artist like himself. He reached the shingle and dropped lazily back against the cliff.

"What a slave you are, Ferrars," he said. "You never used to be so industrious. What is the matter with you? By Jove, though, that's good, old man! That'll be the picture of the year, or my name's not Jones!"

Gerald Ferrars got up from his stool with his face alight.

"I mean it to be," he said eagerly. "You know how I've worked for this, Dickie. It's given me a lot of trouble to get that light on the sea. I've haunted the shore every day at this hour, and I do believe it's perfect now, Dickie."

Dickie Jones looked a little grave. He knew very well that during the three months he had lived at Wilbeach, Gerald had spent so many hours of the day in hard work, but he also knew that the rest of the time had been occupied in dangerous play—dangerous for one person at least. He looked at the picture, magnificent in its power and strength and beauty, on the easel.

"And you're going back to London to-morrow?" he asked.

"Yes, of course," Gerald said. "Now that this is finished there's no reason for staying."

Dickie Jones looked out at sea again.

"What will Miss Daisy Clifford say?" he asked.

Gerald frowned and pushed a little bundle of brushes into his box with a clatter.

"Confound it! I don't know," he said.

"You'd no business to do it," Dickie went on quickly. "It was beastly unfair. You came down to do work that would make another woman your wife and then set to work deliberately to make love to Daisy. She is only a little girl and probably never met a man like you before, and I've meant to tell you several times—it was a beastly caddish thing to do."

Gerald's face flushed angrily for a moment and his lips set as if he would have replied sharply, but he shrugged his shoulders instead.

"Mind your own business," he said. "Daisy's all right. She knows it was only fun."

But did she? Dickie got up and crunched a yard or two across the shingle, and came back.

"Are you sure she does?" he asked. "Because you know you are rather fond of playing at love and letting them think it's real. Miss Reeves was the only one who made you be serious and you can't even stick to her. Are you sure Daisy Clifford understands?"

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His ugly grey eyes looked straight at Gerald's handsome ones, and Gerald looked away uneasily.

"Confound your impertinence!" he cried. "Go and look after Daisy yourself. You know very well that I always hoped to marry Miss Reeves!"

"Yes, I know," said Dickie, "but I've thought just lately that you've been playing at love even more realistically than usual. I almost thought you were in earnest. I suppose you're certain you're not?"

He looked keenly at Gerald's face, and then turned, humming the old foolish air—"You are the honeysuckle, I am the bee."

"I wish to goodness you wouldn't sing that stupid rubbish," Gerald cried. "It's the silliest nonsense I ever heard."

"Is it though?" said Dickie. "It's true of you, anyhow. You're the bee yourself. You run about from place to place making love to every girl you meet, and then you go off without thinking any more about it. Now there's Daisy. You'll leave her like the rest, and if you come back here in a month or two you'll see what you've done. She's just a little bit of honeysuckle, and you've stolen all the happiness from her."

He turned abruptly and strolled away, leaving Gerald staring after him almost stupidly. His face was hard and set when he stooped to put up his paints at last, and he looked at the picture that was to bring him fame and fortune and the woman he loved, with angry eyes. It seemed to him that all the beauty of it had gone. He could not see it for a pair of blue eyes and a little pale face that Dickie had said was like honeysuckle.

It was absurd! She would forget everything in a month, and some day soon, he would hear of her being married to the curate. She would forget him, of course, and the long afternoons on the shore, and the walks, and the hours they had spent on the cliffs together. She would never remember him again, except as a pleasant episode in her life.

Yet he did not like to think that. He did not want her quite to forget him, and, somehow, as he thought about it, he did not want her to forget him at all.

That was stupid, of course, for he was going to marry Amy Reeves, and yet somehow, too, just then, Daisy's pale face was nearer his heart than Amy's brilliant one.

He picked up his paint box and then an odd sound made him start. It came from somewhere quite close—a sound like a sob.

He stood and listened, and this time he heard it distinctly—someone sobbing close behind him.

He looked up at the cliff and the zigzag path that wound down between coarse grass and stunted bushes. It was someone hidden there, perhaps.

He stood with a strange feeling at heart. It was a girl, of course. What was she sobbing for he wondered?

Somehow Daisy's white face seemed to rise before him again, and he took a step forward across the shingle.

At the sound of it, the sobbing ceased abruptly. Gerald stared hard at a big bush close at hand, and fancied he could just discern behind the dark leaves a glimpse of a girl's white dress.

He went forward slowly until he could see right behind it and then his heart jumped painfully, for it was Daisy herself who crouched there—Daisy, with her face hidden and her shoulders shaking—Daisy who had heard every word Dickie Jones had said about Amy Reeves!

Gerald stood still for a moment, and then went closer to the little figure behind the bush.

"Daisy!" he cried.

He saw her give a start and then lift a bewildered, agitated face.

"Daisy," he said again. "Why are you crying like that?"

She rose slowly to her feet with her lips still quivering and her eyes still wet.

"It was nothing," she said. "I—I didn't know you were there. I thought you'd gone along the shore."

She hesitated. He looked sharply at her white, drawn face and wondered for a short instant how it was Miss Reeves' seemed so vulgar beside it. Then he went forward and catching her arm, pulled her down on to the shore. There he put his hand on her shoulder and looked into her eyes.

"You heard what Dickie Jones said?" he remarked.

Daisy could never tell a lie and she could not now. She looked uneasily out at the great sea and, her lips quivered again.

"I—I—couldn't help it," she stammered. "I came down the cliff close behind him, and when I heard what he said I—I couldn't come any farther."

She looked so small and helpless that Gerald felt a thorough brute. His hand on her shoulder relaxed a little.

"Well, it was true," he said roughly. "Every bit of it was true. I've been a cur. I've been working for another woman, and this picture—" He dragged her suddenly towards it and made her stand facing it—the picture she loved because it was his, the picture which she had watched day by day as it grew under his brush, the picture she had been so proud of!

She shivered a little as if a cold wind had suddenly blown up from the sea.

"You see it," he cried. "It's perfect now. It will bring me fame—oh, I know it will, and you've helped me to paint it, you've been at my side and helped me to catch the colours—oh, your thoughts are in it as well as mine, and yet I painted it for another woman!"

She gave a little sob but said nothing.

"Why don't you call me a brute?" he demanded passionately. "You know I'm a cur. You know I pretended—God knows what things to you. Why don't you round on me?"

She looked up at him for an instant.

"I can't," she said brokenly.

Gerald's hand trembled. He looked at his picture. He tried to conjure up the hungry ambition that had possessed him three months ago and to crush down the stupid weakness that threatened to master him now, and he took his hand from Daisy's shoulder and clenched it. Why did she not upbraid him? Why did she not reproach him, hurl ugly names at him as he deserved? It would be easier for him then, for he was going back to Miss Reeves, of course!

Yet was he? He looked at Daisy suddenly. She was standing quite still, trying to steady her face and to make him believe that she did not really care. He could see the determination in her eyes to make him think that she had been playing at love too, and the sight stabbed him.

He stooped suddenly and picked up a brush from his box.

"Daisy!" he cried hoarsely.

He rose to his feet again and held out a hand to her. It was trembling violently and his face was set and grey as he made his supreme sacrifice.

He plunged forward and dashed across the blue and green and purple of his picture, a hideous splash of red!

Daisy gave a cry. He turned to her and dropped the brush.

"Daisy, forgive me," he cried. "I've been a brute, I've been a cur, but I've put an end to it now, and if you'll forgive me I'll paint a better picture than that. I'll work hard for you—for you!"

She looked into his eyes and held her breath.

"But—the other girl?" she said brokenly.

He pointed to the picture.

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"She will not marry me now," he cried, "I've destroyed my picture and put an end to that, and Daisy, I did not love her after all. It was you."

She looked up at him questioningly. He saw the doubt in her eyes give way to faith, and he stooped and kissed her hands.

* * * * *

Twenty minutes later Dickie Jones, rounding a boulder, fancied he saw Daisy in Gerald's arms, and it seemed to him that both were embarrassed and commenced with unnecessary haste to put up the paints.

His brow darkened.

"He's a bigger cur even than I thought," he muttered. Then he stopped short. Was he *really* staring at Gerald's masterpiece with a great splash of red across it, or was it a trick?

He wheeled round.

"Good gracious, what on earth does this mean?" he cried.

Gerald's arm went brazenly and boldly round Daisy's waist, and his lips met hers.

"It means that the bee has healed the wound he made in the honeysuckle, and that he's now sipping the honey from the ruby lips, and so forth," Dickie said.

Then he turned and strolled away, humming the refrain.

A. L. Brazier.

The Sound of a Voice.

A Pathetic Narrative of a Recovered Memory.

Along the white dusty road a man was trudging; his greasy, shuffling figure making the only blot on an otherwise perfect landscape.

He was a tall, gaunt fellow, with a shock of tangled hair, and his seamed and furrowed face bore the unmistakable signs of a chequered career. His clothes, which were in a shocking state of dilapidation, hung from his spare frame in a series of fluttering rags, so that he bore an almost ludicrous resemblance to an animated scarecrow.

From time to time he stopped to readjust a piece of dirty rag which bound up an injured ankle, limping on afresh, reviling the heat.

It was the 21st August, a black letter day in the wretched creature's existence, but the fact of its being noon and his having risen without breakfasting, absorbed his whole thoughts, and excluded any remembrance of the fatal day from entering his mind.

Six years ago the prison gates had opened to admit Charles Jefferies, an absconding bank clerk. The case had attracted some little attention at the time, since the prisoner, who was well connected, was on the eve of his marriage.

Taking into consideration that Jefferies was the tool of others, and more sinned against than sinning, the judge had passed a sentence of two years' imprisonment on him.

Immediately on hearing the sentence pronounced, the man had swooned and been carried from the court to the prison hospital, to lie for many weeks in complete oblivion to his surroundings, racked and tortured by an attack of brain fever. After a period of weary suspense, during which time his life hung in the balance, the scales turned in Jefferies' favour, and he lived, a hollow-eyed shadow of his former self, a man without a memory.

The prison doctor looked upon Jefferies' loss as a blessing in disguise. "What would some of the best of us give," he remarked, "let alone these poor chaps, to be able to wipe the slate clean and begin over again. And that is what it amounts to with Jefferies, he has no recollection of the past, and never will have, unless some kind friend enlightens him. Why, bless me, he does not even know his name or age, let alone what he is here for."

At the expiration of the man's sentence, the prison authorities informed the father of the day and hour of his son's release, but by a fatal error the clerk wrote the wrong date, so that when Jefferies senior arrived at the prison he learnt that his son had departed on the previous day.

From that time Charles Jefferies vanished as completely as if the earth had swallowed him up, and despite the exhaustive search instituted by his parents no trace of the missing man was ever found.

So Jefferies began life afresh with a two year old memory full of nothing brighter than prison reflections.

It was impossible for the man to prosper. He could only procure work of an unskilled character, and his peculiar reticence, due to his infirmity, made him unpopular with his fellow-workmen. By the end of eighteen months his clothes were shabby, in two years they were ragged. Then came several seasons spent toiling in the fields, each followed by winter in one of the big cities, the remembrance of which haunted him like a nightmare.

By this time the few faded garments which covered him were dilapidated beyond description, and misery and want had so dulled his intellect that he no longer struggled against Fate.

And between the well-groomed, good-looking bank clerk and this human derelict, not even the mother who bore him could have traced any resemblance.

Unable at last to proceed any further, the tramp seated himself at the road side. His sprained ankle was causing him a good deal of pain, it was swollen out of all shape and hurt horribly; the heat, too, was intense, and adding greatly to his discomfort was the ever present fact that eighteen hours had passed since he had last tasted food. If he could only go to sleep it would be cooler when he woke up, he told himself.

Soothed somewhat by this reflection he lay back and closed his eyes, and like D'Artagnan's redoubtable servant, Planchet, proceeded to "dine sleeping," an unsatisfactory method of taking his meals which he had been forced to patronise a good deal of late.

While he lay thus in a state of semi-unconsciousness, a party of pleasure-seekers on their way to the river, and bearing a picnic basket in their midst, passed by. One of their number, a girl in a white drill dress, who carried a scarlet parasol in one

hand, suddenly caught up her skirts and stepped hurriedly into the middle of the road.

"Oh, Jim," she cried, turning to the man beside her, "did you see that awful creature lying asleep in the hedge? I nearly trod on him." They looked back.

With his head on one arm, his tangled hair partly concealing his face, and his mouth open, the tramp presented, if possible, a more hideous spectacle asleep than awake.

"I don't wonder you were frightened!" the man exclaimed, half angrily, suppressing a shudder, "such human miseries should not be allowed to wander about at large."

"I know you'll think me strange," the girl remarked, as they turned away and walked on to join the others, "but I cannot help wondering if that wretched object has ever had any one to care for him. It hardly seems possible, does it?"

The man shot a rapid glance at his companion's face. It was quite serious. "Whatever put such an idea in your head? Do you know, Grace, I think you are different from any other girl I have ever met. You are all moods and fancies."

"Am I? I suppose it is because I have had something in my life to make me different," she replied gravely. Then, laying her hand on his arm, she continued speaking in a voice she tried hard to keep calm, but which trembled in spite of herself. "Six years ago to-day *he* was put in prison. I know it is not fair to remind you of that other miserable business, but I could not help it; it all seemed to come back to me as I stood looking at that tramp—then I remembered the date—Jim, what *has* become of him? I shall never believe that the man they took out of the Regent's Canal was Charlie, even though his father identified him, for I know nothing would ever have induced him to part with the ring I gave him, and the poor drowned man wore no rings."

Before her companion had time to reply, a young fellow in flannels called out to them to hurry up, "as the luncheon basket was confoundedly heavy, and it was Jim's turn to take a hand with it." As they passed on out of sight the tramp sat up and rubbed his eyes. The voice of one of the passers-by had broken in on his troubled dreams and touched a chord in his memory that had lain dormant for years. Like a faint echo coming up from the past it brought with it a sense of overpowering peace and happiness. For a string of fleeting thoughts were chasing each other through his poor muddled brain in perplexing numbers, scraps of conversation he recollected having heard years ago, oddly familiar scenes and faces, and above all the sound of a woman's voice, which quickened the sluggish blood in his veins, and set his shrunken body trembling. When and where had he heard that voice before?

Still trembling, he scrambled to his feet and stared wildly about him, but the spell was broken, his dream had faded and nothing but the twittering of the birds and the humming of the insects sounded in his ears.

With a deep-drawn sigh the man buried his head in his hands and tried to think. He knew he had stood on the brink of discovering the mystery that had darkened his life. Something, he knew not what, had half awakened his memory, and, will o' the wisp-like, had flitted on where he could not follow.

Absently he began twisting a gold ring round his finger. Without being able to explain why, he had always entertained a foolish regard for this scrap of jewellery. In some way or other he felt convinced that it had played an important part in his history, and he clung to it fiercely, as the one link that bound him to the past. Rocking himself to and fro in his misery he groaned aloud: "Lord, what have I done that I may not remember?"

The day wore on. The sun, once high in the heavens, had begun its downward course, while a faint breeze disturbed the glassy smoothness of the river.

Jefferies meanwhile had dragged himself to the water's edge, and having satisfied his thirst had crawled back into the shade of some bushes to sleep.

Suddenly the stillness was broken by a shrill cry for help, followed by answering cries in the distance and the sound of oars striking the water in quick succession.

Scrambling hurriedly to his feet, the man scanned the surface of the river.

To his left a girl in white was pointing frantically with a red parasol to a dark object which was being borne swiftly towards him. At a little distance a couple of oars floated idly on the water.

Standing on the bank, half dazed with sleep, Jefferies nevertheless realised that the same voice that had moved him so strangely a few hours before, was calling to him, urging him to action, and he obeyed the summons blindly. As it happened, in his youth he had been a fine swimmer, but no remembrance of that time came back to him as he plunged into the water and struck out mechanically towards the drowning man.

Exhausted from want of food, with little else than the mere knowledge of the art of swimming left to him, Jefferies had scarcely gone a few yards before he found his strength beginning to fail. Every moment now he was growing weaker. Still he kept on, his eyes fixed on a dark object, now not far distant, pausing at length to clutch frantically at it as it floated by.

There was a sharp, wild struggle, the water closing twice over both men's heads, but Jefferies never left go his hold on the other man, knowing that, once parted, the strong current would have drawn him on to certain death.

Presently the boat swept alongside, and the drowning man and his rescuer were lifted into safety.

* * * * *

They laid him on the bank and eager hands tried to force some brandy between his lips, but without success.

"Poor chap, I'm afraid it's all up with him!" one man remarked.

A girl in a white dress came towards the group. "The doctor says Jim will be all right. He has just come to, but he can't leave him yet. And the other man is to be carried up to the cottage at once," she ended breathlessly.

At the sound of her voice the tramp stirred uneasily; then his eyes opened with the light of recognition.

"Grace!" he cried in a voice trembling with joy, but which sounded to his hearers like a husky whisper, "Grace, don't you know me?"

The girl shrank back from the sodden heap of rags at her feet with a little cry of dismay. "What can he mean?" she asked aghast.

"He mistakes you for some one else," one of the group whispered. "Say something to him, he's a plucky beggar."

The girl bent over the prostrate form, "You have saved the life of the man I am going to marry, so I shall never be able to thank you enough," she said kindly, adding, "and you shall never want again."

He scarcely heeded what she said, for his brain had grown suddenly clear so that the past was no longer a sealed book to him. And with his new-found knowledge came the hideous fear that before long the woman he loved would learn his miserable secret. With a quick movement he had drawn from his finger the ring she had once given him, and gathering together his remaining strength, he flung it far into the river, and as the circles widened over the spot where it sank, a smile of triumph flickered on his face, then his head fell back, and those standing by knew that his soul had fled.

Gwendolyn Nation.

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Bowser: Genealogist.

He Starts Out to Complete the Family Tree.

"I HAVE got to run out for an hour or two this evening," observed Mr. Bowser as dinner was finished and he lighted his cigar.

"Business?" queried Mrs. Bowser, without much interest.

"Something in that line. You know I have been anxious for several years to complete my family record. I can trace the Bowsers back 400 years with the exception of two breaks. There's a break between Moses and Elijah Bowser and another between Aaron and Nicodemus. I have been trying to fill in the gaps, and I think I have got hold of the right string at last."

"Have you found some old records?"

"I have found that there are two other Bowser families in town, and I'm hopeful that they will have the records I want. I shall be delighted if they have."

"I don't exactly see why you should care about any Bowser 200 years old," said Mrs. Bowser.

"But I do care a great deal. It makes quite a difference whether your ancestors were ditch diggers or kings, or at least it does to me. As for you, of course you don't care a pin. You were a Tompkins, and I don't think any of the Tompkins family, from No. 1 down, ever amounted to anything great."

"But the Bowsers have?"

"Well, the family tree, as far as completed, shows princes, dukes, barons, governors, and statesmen among them."

"Then the family must be on the decline."

"Woman, what do you mean by that?" shouted Mr. Bowser as his hair began to crackle. "Do you mean to insinuate that I am an unworthy descendant of the name?"

"Not at all," she quietly replied, "only there don't seem to be any more princes and dukes about now. If I were you, I'd let it all go."

"I shall do nothing of the kind. I may not be a prince or a duke, but that I bear the name of Bowser is enough. As this matter is of no earthly interest to you, and as old Tompkins was probably hung for murder, you need not sit up for me."

The cat attempted to follow him out, but he thrust her back and walked swiftly away. There was a Bowser living six streets away. It was in a block of flats, and there were five flights of stairs to climb. Mr. Bowser found the other Bowser with a pipe in his mouth and his feet on the stove. The subject of genealogy was introduced at once, and the new Bowser took his feet off the stove and stood up to say:

"So you are hunting up the old Bowsers, eh?"

"I am."

"Well, I'll give you two minutes to get downstairs. My grandfather was hung for murder, my father was shot as a sheep thief, my brother's down at Portland now, but I don't propose to have anybody come here and rake up my feelings over it. You put it down that there never was a Bowser yet who was any too good and let it go at that."

Mr. Bowser got out. There was another to call on, but he was out. He lived over a public-house, and Mr. Bowser had a little talk with the proprietor, and then returned home. Mrs. Bowser was reading and the cat asleep, and he was not questioned as he got out his family tree to look it over. Not five minutes had passed, however, when the bell rang and the door was opened to a man who gave the name of Bowser, and added: "I was told you was looking for me. Is it a job you have for a poor man out of work?"

"I was seeking to trace the Bowser family back," replied Mr. Bowser.

"Then maybe I can help you, sir, as I have lots of papers."

"What I want to find out first is, who came between Moses and Elijah?"

"Then I'm your man, sir. I'm the one as comes between Moses and Elijah, and if there's a shilling or so coming to me I'll take it now."

"But you can't be the man. Moses Bowser died over 200 years ago, and Elijah followed him within thirty years."

"Makes no difference, sir. My name is Sam Bowser, and I know I come between 'em. You can take my word for it and give me the cash. I don't suppose you expect a gentleman to throw his time away entirely?"

Mrs. Bowser was merciful enough to withdraw and go upstairs and the cat to seek the dark spot under the piano, and while Mr. Bowser was hotly arguing with Sam Bowser the bell rang and two other Bowsers called, Joe and Jim.

"Hearing that you was looking up the Bowser family, sir——" began Joe.

"And seeing as I'm a Bowser myself, sir——" added Jim.

"We thought we'd call and see what it was all about," continued both together.

"Don't trust 'em, sir!" whispered Sam Bowser. "Can't you see that while we looks alike they look altogether different?"

"Gentlemen, did any of you ever hear of Aaron or Nicodemus Bowser?" asked Mr. Bowser.

"We have, sir," replied the three in chorus.

"What Bowser lived between them?"

"I did, sir," chorussed the trio.

The cat came out of hiding and took a look at the four Bowsers and skulked back, and after a strained silence Mr. Bowser was about to move an adjournment when the bell rang again and another Bowser appeared.

"My name, sir," he explained, "is Leviticus Bowser, and I understand that you are hunting up the Bowser family tree."

"But you're not in it!" shouted Joe, Jim, and Sam.

"But I am, and you loafers are simply after money!"

"You're a liar!"

"Stop!" shouted Mr. Bowser. "Now, then, Leviticus, where do you come in?"

"I come in everywhere, sir, and don't you let those other hoaxing Bowsers take you in."

"Hit him!"

"Knock his head off!"

"Kill him dead!"

"Shut up!" roared Mr. Bowser as he waved his arms hysterically. "As I told you, there's a break between Moses and Elijah Bowser, and——"

"That's where I comes in, sir!" shouted Leviticus at the top of his voice.

"But you are not 175 years old."

"But I am, sir, almost 200 years old, and if there is any reward I want it!"

"Hit him!" screamed the others.

"Punch him hard!"

"Knock him out!"

"All of you get out of this!" ordered Mr. Bowser. "The whole four of you are frauds! Out you go!"

Then Joe Bowser, Jim Bowser, Sam Bowser, and Leviticus Bowser turned on Mr. Bowser. A fearful free fight then began, and lasted five minutes. Then the front door opened, and four Bowsers clattered down the street. Mrs. Bowser looked down from the head of the stairs and the cat from the hall, and they saw the fifth Bowser lying prone on the floor. The cat looked up as if inquiring what could be done, but Mrs. Bowser shook her head and sighed and returned to her room

M. Quad.

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A Terrible Anarchist.

And the Story of a Lost Hat.

"Of course, Dr. Garth, as you are not an artist, you cannot see much in it," said Miss Janet Mason, with a somewhat scornful flash from her piercing black eyes. "*I* think it is lovely!"

"It" was the figure before her; an Italian with an abundance of hair, and posed in a special manner as a model for a painting on which she was engaged. Miss Janet meant the hair when she said "It," but I mentally applied the word to the man. That remark about not being an artist was a trifle sarcastic and quite uncalled for.

"He is a good specimen of a villain," I replied.

"Speak your mind," exhorted Miss Janet, with the same sarcasm; "he doesn't understand English, so it's safe enough. I think his hair is just lovely."

"It looks—er—unclean, and reminds me of certain unsavoury spots in this great city," I rejoined. "There are only two historical male characters, that I remember, who had a lot of hair, and they came to a bad end. Samson and Absalom."

Miss Janet reminded me that one of the two came to grief through a want of hair, and I tried to turn the conversation by asking her not to put her brush in her mouth.

"It's lovely—the hair and the pose, I mean. I've put the brush into my mouth ever since I can remember, and it doesn't seem to have killed me yet! Look at him!"

I was looking at the Italian scamp—I was sure he was a scoundrel, and I said so. At that moment a voice from the doorway exclaimed:

"Poor thing!"

"Do you mean Dr. Garth?" innocently inquired Janet of her sister Alice, who had spoken.

"I mean the model," retorted Alice, exchanging greetings with me as I turned. She was always very commiserating. "Why do you keep the poor man in that uncomfortable pose when you are not working?"

"It is not uncomfortable, and I keep him like that because I know what a trouble it is to get him into position again if I let him get down. But Dr. Garth has kept me talking so long that I might as well give up for to-day." Turning to the ruffian—I was convinced that he was a ruffian!—she said:—"Come down, Paolo!" She proceeded to repeat the order in not very good French, and to tell him to come again on the following day at the same time, but it occurred to me that the Italian understood the words "come down" quite well.

Paolo came down, shook his curls gracefully—I admit that there was some grace in the action—and placed a cap on his head, sticking a pin through his hair and the cap just as a woman would. Then he bowed, wished us adieu, using the Italian word for it, and walked out.

"Looks like Guy Fawkes!" I murmured, but I think that my remark escaped observation.

The model had scarcely passed out of our sight before the door opened to admit Jack Mason, himself an artist. He stalked in easily, with a lazy salutation, and we all instinctively glanced at his hat.

That hat! Everybody who knew the Masons knew that hat; it was part of Jack's being, and his moods were read by the manner in which he wore it. "Most unconventional," was the verdict of his lady acquaintances. He wore it indoors always, and the only occasions when he did not wear it out of doors, was when he didn't wear one at all. It was a soft felt, very grey in tint, which might have been the original hue, but was more probably the work of the fingers of time, and it had an exceedingly wide brim. When he wore that hat fairly on the top of his head the brim resembled a halo, and it denoted that Jack was in a calm frame of mind, at peace with everybody, and probably painting a pastoral landscape or an idyl of the woods; when it was crushed down over his brows, Jack was working desperately hard; when it was cocked over one ear, he was in a light vein and at work on a picture for which his French model was giving sittings; and on those occasions when he pulled that hat off his head—that is, properly speaking, when he really wasn't wearing it at all—his sisters retired hastily to their own rooms before the hat reached the corner into which it was thrown, and left Jack to himself.

On this occasion the hat was in the halo pose, and we talked placidly for a few moments before I left.

It was several days later when I again set eyes on the Italian. I was passing close to the Masons' residence, not intending to call, when I saw the front gate open and a figure glide on to the pavement; I recognised the model. He glanced furtively up and down the street, and a slight gust of wind blew aside the fold of his coat, exposing for a second a clenched hand gripping a knife!

My blood seemed to run cold within me as I felt that my dislike to this man was justified; at any rate, I tried to think that it was justified, for I had certainly taken a violent dislike to him. He occupied so much of Janet Mason's attention! I stepped out hurriedly in his direction; he saw me, turned and fled.

I was after him like a dart, and although he was undoubtedly fleet of foot, I should certainly have overtaken the villain but for a thought that pulled me up within a dozen yards of the Masons' house and made me turn back. Had anyone been hurt?

I hurried up the front steps and pulled the bell violently—very violently, in fact. I was so concerned for their welfare. As the door was not opened speedily, I pulled again at the bell handle, then again and again. Something must have happened to the inmates, of that there was not the shadow of a doubt in my mind. It was lucky that I, a medical man of some standing, chanced to be so near; much may be done if assistance is rendered quickly. I pulled again; time was precious. I heard the sound of voices talking hurriedly, not to say wildly, and I knew that there was confusion and dismay inside. They were losing their heads; so I pulled the bell handle again in an endeavour to bring someone to the door, and this time the handle came off in my hand. Then the door moved, and I saw Janet, Alice, the housemaid and the cook all in the hall as if each had rushed from a different part of the house to answer my peremptory summons.

"Are you all well?" I gasped.

"Yes, thank you!" answered Janet, adding, with additional sweetness in her tones, "Are you?"

There was a whole volume in those two words; this

and the fact that the four women were clearly less disturbed than I, disconcerted me, and I could not reply. Janet suggested that she should take the bell-handle, as I might be tired of holding it—that is, if I had finished with it. There was a surprised, questioning expression on the faces of the others that made me still more uneasy; I felt that they had a very poor opinion of my sanity, yet I could not say anything in explanation.

All I could utter was: "Are you *sure* you are quite well?"

"Oh, quite!" chimed Alice and Janet in chorus, while the two servants murmured something indistinct.

"Are you certain that *you* are—er—quite well, Dr. Garth?" asked Alice. "You have had a very trying day, of course."

Alice Mason was altogether in error, for I had had a slow day, and I said so. They invited me to enter and have a rest, but I declined on the pretext that I had something important on just then. I walked down to the gate and had gone a few yards along the street when I heard steps behind me, and turned to face Alice Mason.

"Do come back and have a cup of strong tea, Dr. Garth," she pleaded. "It is so refreshing, and will brace up your nerves!"

I could understand what she thought; she imagined that I had overtaxed my brain, and was a bit queer in the head; so I again declined and strode away, only to wish the next minute that I had accepted, and thus gained time and opportunity to make an explanation. Janet Mason had told me more than once, with a flash of those piercing eyes, that I jumped at conclusions and arrived at decisions too promptly, but in actual fact I was generally of an undecided character.

I hardly cared to face the Masons after that, but I did summon up courage to accept an invitation extended by Jack when I saw him out. I was rather relieved to find another visitor, a lady, at the Masons' when I arrived; they wouldn't be able to say much about that bell affair of the other night. Jack, having given the invitation, was out; that was so like him. However, we sipped tea and talked till it was time for the other visitor, Mrs. Bryant, to go, and then Jack came in like a whirlwind.

"Where's the hat?" he roared. He had something resembling a cap perched so far back that it was almost on the back of his neck instead of his head.

"Which hat?" we all inquired.

"Which hat?" echoed Jack contemptuously. "Why, *my* hat!"

"Here it is," said Alice, taking it from his head quietly. "Now, I think you owe Mrs. Bryant an apology for your rather rude conduct."

Jack appeared ready to burst forth again, but checked himself, and was very courtly towards the visitor, who, as she left five minutes later, whispered to me, "So unconventional, isn't he?"

"Now," said Jack Mason wrathfully, when we were together, "where's my hat? I don't mean this cap, which I have put on because the other is missing."

"In the hall, Jack, where you left it! Don't be absurd!" said Janet.

"Come and find it for me!" said Jack. "I haven't had that hat for days, simply because I couldn't find it. When I went away the other evening in a hurry, I put on this cap. I haven't touched a brush for days. Now I've come in and feel like work I want that hat, and I've hunted for it, but it isn't to be found!"

Sure enough, there was no trace of it in the hall. Jack pointed to his bicycle, which stood in a nook; there were traces of string hanging to the wallet still attached to the handle-bar. No one dared touch Jack's things, and, though it wasn't tidy to allow the bike to remain there in that condition, it had to stay there till Jack removed it. He explained the mystery of the string on the wallet. The wind had been so strong that he had taken off his hat and substituted it by his cap, tying the former to the wallet.

"And I have just noticed that the string is cut!" he cried. "That hat has been stolen!"

By whom? That was where *I* came in. I explained how I had seen Paolo slink out of the doorway like an assassin, with a long knife in his hand. I am not an artist, as Janet Mason has reminded me, but I am a bit of a scribbler, and I was able to tell that story with effect. I am afraid that I added a couple or so of inches to the length of the knife, and I dwelt on Paolo's murderous appearance till I made them look pale. That was why I had rung the bell!

"But why didn't you say so at the time?" questioned Janet, with uplifted eyebrows.

That was just the point; why had I not explained? For the life of me I couldn't answer her, and so I increased my reputation as a lunatic.

What was to be done? To accuse Paolo was worse than useless, for he would simply deny the charge, and no one had seen the hat in his possession. Jack laughed heartily at the affair, and said that he would not trouble, but Janet remarked that he wouldn't do a stroke of work without it, and she should put the matter in the hands of the police. What did we pay taxes for, she wanted to know, if we didn't put things into the hands of the police? But she did not wish to prosecute the Italian; all that was necessary was to get that hat back.

My practice is in a very poor locality, where there are many foreigners, and my next acquaintance with the hat was in a poor tenement to which I had been called to attend a baby. As I examined the child, I was dimly conscious of a figure gliding in, unheeded by the weeping mother, and taking something of a greyish hue from the wall. I had done my best for the infant and given the mother certain final instructions, when another figure came in. I heard a

A slight gust of wind blew aside the fold of his coat, exposing, for a second, a clenched hand gripping a knife!

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pin fall to the ground, something like a cloud swayed about the head of the figure, which had made a stride to the wall, and then I heard Paolo's voice say, in Italian, of which I understood a little, "Traitor!"

It all flashed on me in an instant; the greyish object on the wall was Jack's hat, and it had been taken by a detective from Paolo's poor home!

Paolo went downstairs swiftly, and I followed. At the foot, he came butt against another man, and I, listening on the dark staircase, caught an odd word here and there, but I heard Janet Mason's name uttered fiercely. What devilry was this ruffian at now, and what danger threatened Janet? I must do my best to thwart it and this would help me to retrieve my character.

They went out and again I followed. I was able to keep close behind, for it was slightly foggy, and they were so intent on their talk. I could not hear much, for the Italian was bad and not comprehensible to me, except now and then. But I heard Janet Mason's name no fewer than three times, and the general tone of the talk seemed to be indicative of anger, which, with an Italian, so I concluded, was synonymous with revenge and daggers.

They went into another house, and I was almost chilled while waiting for them. Presently they emerged, walked back to Paolo's lodging, and there separated. There was no doubt Paolo was urging his companion to do something, which the other was doing reluctantly. When the companion was a dozen yards off, Paolo shouted to him in Italian and this time I understood. It was:

"The tall one. Be not afraid! When you are in front of her, you can——!"

He concluded with a forward and a downward motion of his hand, that made me shudder; the companion waved his arm comprehensively, and went off.

My mind was quickly made up; there should be no further charge of indecision. I knew the shortest way to the residence of my friends, the Masons, and I could be there first.

When I turned into the street, having cabbed it part of the way, I could see no sign of the Anarchist, as I dubbed him. This might have been expected, seeing that he would walk.

I decided to wait; I was not going to jump at conclusions. I watched in a convenient doorway, and at length saw him coming.

The scoundrel's nerve appeared to fail him, for he passed and repassed the house three or four times. I expected to see him go up to the door and ring the bell, but he went so far from the house at last that I thought he had given up his murderous intention. Then he turned resolutely, retraced his steps, and went through the gate. I slipped out from my hiding place, and was creeping towards him as he stood on the steps. Instead of ringing, however, and waiting for a chance to strike the fell blow, he rattled at the letter box, into which he dropped something very gingerly, and then turned to bolt. But I was on the scoundrel, and had him by the throat. He had adopted the safer plan of leaving an infernal machine in the letter box; something to be opened by Janet, of course.

The Anarchist gave a great yell as I fell upon him, and we rolled about the gravel path in a fierce struggle. I am told that the maid and the cook shrieked from the top wind in a way that aroused the street, but I heard nothing; I was too busy with the Anarchist. Over and over we rolled, tearing and fighting while an admiring crowd gathered and applauded. I was brought to a sense of my surroundings by my antagonist becoming still, and I saw that Jack Mason, his hat crushed over his brows, was trying to throttle the Anarchist, and Janet and Alice were regarding the scene from the steps.

"Come out into the street!" I yelled. "It'll go off!"

They came out hastily, and the housemaid nearly fell down two flights of stairs in her anxiety to get out. The cook remained at the window, shrieking for the police and the fire brigade, and varying the performance by calling everyone a coward for leaving her to be murdered and blown up.

Jack shouted to her to stop that row, using language that was scarcely polite, but she kept it up.

"What's it all about?" asked Jack, turning to me. He had his opponent by the collar, having dragged him to his feet. "I think we had better go in; this fellow is tame enough."

He looked it, certainly; but I could not permit them to enter.

"It's in the letter box," I explained, "and it's just as likely to go off as not. Anyhow, we might take him in, and the ladies could stay outside."

"But it's beginning to rain!" protested Alice.

"Damp is better than dynamite!" I exclaimed.

But Alice didn't understand, and Janet cut the knot by going in. I sighed for the safety of all, but Alice and Jack, with his captive, followed, and there was nothing else to be done. Jack slammed the door in the face of the eager crowd which, unmindful of danger, pressed on our heels. He slammed it with such violence that I cried: "You've done it!" expecting that the shock would explode the dynamite, but it didn't.

I was asked to give further particulars. As soon as I had said that the Anarchist had dropped something into the letter box, Janet went forward to get it, but I sprang in front of her. I would never allow her to expose herself to such danger.

"Nonsense!" she exclaimed.

That was not kind, but I was firm. She protested that we must get to the bottom of the matter, and it was not fair to ask a policeman to get it out, even if one should ever come along. At last I had a brilliant idea; the Anarchist should take it out himself!

Janet bade him take it out; the wretch trembled as she looked at him, and shrank from her, which caused me to request Jack to hold him more tightly. He took out a very dirty envelope, addressed to Miss Janet Mason.

"For me," said Janet. "I'll open it."

But again I forbade her. Was it not the very thing that the rascals wished? It would explode as she opened it. The Anarchist must do it.

The Anarchist looked at Janet, and shivered as the piercing eye rested upon him. He could scarcely tear the envelope, but at last he got out the sheet of equally dirty paper, and Jack read its contents as the man held it. Written in very bad English, it ran as follows:

"I have ben in houses wher sovrins laid about and I never steal.

"I am not theef. You tell me this day, I stole hat. No! I take it because you refuse to pay 3d. wich is mine for overwork, fifteen minutes. It is my rite. You have hat when you pay, but you send tektif man to steal hat. I am honest. "Paolo."

"He's a queer fish, that Paolo!" said Jack. Then he roared with laughter. "To think that Garth took it for dynamite!"

Then they all laughed, even the Anarchist forcing a smile.

"It's all very well," I observed frigidly. Of course, when I used those words I meant that it was *not* all very well. "But how did it all come about?"

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We spoke to the Anarchist in French, Italian, and broken English, all of bad quality, and we got the story out of him.

Paolo had demanded threepence extra for posing for a quarter of an hour longer, at the last sitting but one, and Janet had refused; thereupon Paolo had taken the hat, "which was not worth more than threepence"—this made Jack wince, and I was glad. Paolo intended to give it up when he got his rights. He had asked Guiseppe to write, not knowing English well enough himself, after the recovery of the hat by the detective, and upbraid Janet, at the same time demanding the threepence which they would share. Guiseppe was to present the letter to Janet in the place of Paolo, who was now afraid of the "bad eye." (I explained that this meant "evil eye," an old Italian superstition.) Guiseppe would not fall under the influence of Janet's "evil eye."

But Guiseppe's courage had failed him, and he had grown fearful of the "evil eye"; he had almost decided to return and tell Paolo that he (Paolo) ought to have been more brave, and have told the signorita himself. He had plucked up courage finally to drop the letter in the box, and then——.

"Exactly!" said Jack. "Our friend here mauled you terribly." That was cool, seeing that Jack himself had nearly throttled the Anarchist. "Well, you seem willing to do a lot of work for a small wage; you must be used to sweating. Here's five shillings for you. Now be off! I have the hat, as you see."

The man smiled, bowed, and retired in high glee. There was a good deal of talk after his departure, which I need not repeat, but I found that it was a private detective who had stolen the hat from Paolo.

"A private detective!" I cried. "But you don't pay taxes to maintain the police force and then employ——"

But Janet cut me short.

"I am certain you are working too hard," she said, with cutting, pretended sympathy. "You really must go away for a rest."

"Yes, do, Garth," chimed in Jack. "It will do you good; you are a bit unstrung. I'll ask you for the five shillings given to that poor fellow when you come back; never mind it now!"

"Come out into the street!" I yelled. "It'll go off!"

And I heard so much about that hat from everybody during the next week, that I deemed it advisable to take the Masons' advice and go away.

George Day.

Much Pressed.

"Did you take much pressing before you accepted Jack?" asked Mabel of her friend Ethel who had just got engaged. "Oh, a lot. And then Jack is so impulsive, you know. He nearly squeezed all the breath out of my body."

Confessions.

"Can you forgive me and love me still?" said the new-made bride, "when I confess that my teeth are artificial?" "Thank goodness!" cried the groom, as he snatched off his wig; "now I can cool my head."

Solidity.

"There was an annoying hitch in the great ocean scene in my play last night," said Bronson Hoyt, with a sad smile. "When the hero jumped off the raft to save the heroine, he got off in the wrong place, and one of the waves kicked him. It seemed to knock all the sense out of him, for he got up and walked ashore." "What did the heroine do?" "She sat on a wave and laughed."

L'Enfant Terrible.

"Are you coming when I call you, or is there going to be trouble?" said papa to his four-year-old daughter. "I tink dere's going to be trouble, papa," replied the tot, keeping out of his reach.

Riches and Prudence.

He (to the Matrimonial Agent): "I've married that rich party you engaged for me, but she won't give me any money." "And what could you ask better? Not only have you a rich wife, but also a prudent one."

Presence of Mind.

Mrs. F. (petulantly): "You never kiss me now." Mr. F.: "The idea of a woman of your age wanting to be kissed! One would think you were a girl of eighteen." Mrs. F. (sharply): "What do you know about girls of eighteen?" Mr. F. (with great presence of mind): "Why, my dear, weren't you eighteen once yourself?"

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FROM BEST MAN TO BRIDEGROOM.

How a Simple Mistake Brought it all About.

"But I may count on you?" Tom asked. "You know you promised."

"Yes," I replied, "I promised, and I'll keep my promise. I'll be your best man. Not that I wouldn't like to get out of it," I went on; "but if you insist, I suppose that——"

"Oh, come now," said Tom, "don't go in for cynicism; that's cheap. Of course, I'm willing to admit that from your point of view, perhaps, Dorothy Melton may have treated you badly enough, but I wouldn't revile the whole sex, and rail at matrimony, and all that. You'll get over it in time, you know."

Tom is an old friend, and allows himself liberties. I kept my head, and replied calmly:

"I am not cynical, and I'm not 'railing' at matrimony. Moreover, that little affair with the young lady you mention, which I have quite forgotten——"

Tom smiled in a peculiarly trying manner.

"Which I have entirely forgotten—" I repeated.

"And will forget anew every day you live," said Tom.

"That has had nothing whatever to do with my determination to devote myself entirely to my profession. I have already frittered away too much of my life on what we are pleased to call 'society.' But, of course, I'll keep my promise to you."

As the time of Tom's wedding approached I wrote him that I could not get down to Riverton till the afternoon of the wedding day.

I had forgotten that Uncle William Clarkson lived at Riverton, or I might have been prepared for him; but before the train had fairly stopped at the station, Uncle William was at my side, grasping my hand and reaching for my bag. "Here you are at last," he was saying. "I've been to meet every train this morning. You've got to go up to the house with me and get something to eat before the wedding."

"But Tom——" I interposed.

"Oh, that's all right," said Uncle William. "There's a 'phone in the house; you can let Tom know you are here, and that's all that's necessary."

Uncle William called up Tom by telephone, and after a few minutes' chat with him I felt somewhat reassured. Dinner was announced very early, and was soon over. As the clock chimed one I went upstairs to make a hurried toilet. But where was my bag? I hurried downstairs again and put the question to Uncle William.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed, "we must have left it at the station!"

He hurried down to fetch the bag, promising to return "before you know I'm gone," but the minutes slipped away, and the carriage drove up to the gate before he got back. He finally came, however.

"Here you are," he said, as he handed me the bag. "Now, you want to hurry, young man, or you'll be late."

I fairly jumped into my clothes, trusting to luck for appearance. As I was concluding my toilet, Uncle William tapped on the door.

"It's five minutes to two!" he exclaimed.

I couldn't say exactly what I wanted to say, so I contented myself by giving my tie a vicious twist. Three minutes later I dashed down the hall, threw a good-bye to Aunt Margaret, and hurried into the yard.

The coachman was driving away.

"Hi, there!" shouted Uncle William from the front steps. "Hold on there, driver! Wilson, stop that carriage!"

Wilson was evidently Uncle William's next door neighbour. He was leisurely proceeding from his front gate to his own domicile. He turned round slowly and looked at the carriage and then at Uncle William.

"What for?" he asked. "What's the matter with it?"

"Hi, there, driver!" shouted Uncle William again, as I tore down the path.

The coachman drew in his horses with an air of impatient expectancy.

"What in the world do you mean?" cried Uncle William, puffing in anger behind me.

"Yes, what do you mean?" I echoed, "driving off without me?"

"Why, sir," said the evidently greatly puzzled coachman, with a nod of his head toward Mr. Wilson, "he said for——"

"Well, well, well!" cried Mr. Wilson, joining us on the pavement. "What does all this mean, anyway? What are you keeping this carriage here for?"

"Oh!" exclaimed Uncle William, a light breaking in upon him, "you've made a mistake here, Wilson. This is a carriage I ordered to take my nephew to the wedding."

"Oh, I fancy not," said Mr. Wilson, bristling up more than ever. "This is a carriage I ordered to take my niece to the concert."

The two men glared at each other like wild animals, and I turned from one to the other in hopeless perplexity.

"But, look here," put in Uncle William, "Dick's best man, and he mustn't be late at the wedding."

"I can't help that," retorted Mr. Wilson. "My niece has to sing and mustn't be late at the concert, either."

"I'll tell you," cried Aunt Margaret, with sudden inspiration, "why can't they go together? The concert hall is only a little way beyond Christ Church. I know your niece won't object if I explain."

Aunt Margaret dashed out into the street towards the carriage, and I followed, wiping my moist brow, bewailing my crumpling linen, and consumed with impatience.

In a few seconds I heard Aunt Margaret making a hurried explanation, which concluded with "Awfully good of you, I'm sure; but I knew you'd consent under the circumstances;" then the door was flung open, Uncle William gave me a push from behind, while Aunt Margaret murmured introductions, and I found myself stepping into a carriage which seemed filled with flowers and fluffy white stuff, from the midst of which peered the face of—Dorothy Melton!

"Why—Dick—Mr. ——" she cried, half-rising from her seat.

I started back with a confused attempt at an apology, but Uncle William hastily slammed the door, and with a

commanding "Drive quickly now!" motioned the driver to start. The horses were off with a jump, and I sank into the seat opposite the young girl whom six months ago I had sworn never to see again.

"Miss Melton," I began, feeling that I must say something, "I'm extremely sorry to intrude upon you in this manner. I had no idea——"

"Oh, pray do not mention it," said Dorothy. "I am, of course, extremely glad to be of any service whatever to Mrs. Clarkson, and it would be too bad for you to be late at the wedding."

The driver was evidently intent upon reaching the church in time. He turned a corner so sharply that just as I was about to stammer out a commonplace about the wedding, we both were nearly thrown from our seats. Dorothy threw up her hand, her roses fell in confusion, and as I bent forward her dainty fingers lightly brushed my face—

"Oh, Dorothy! Dorothy!" I cried; and then——

I'm sure that I couldn't tell what I said. I only know that the words I had been holding back, the love that I had been trying to stifle for six months, burst from me, and before we reached the next corner Dorothy lifted her shining eyes, and through tears said:

"Oh, Dick! Dick!" and I knew everything was right, and wished that Christ Church was twenty miles away.

The carriage pulled up at the church door in the nick of time, and dashed away again to leave Dorothy at the Concert Hall where she had been singing for a few months.

I found Tom in the vestry, so supremely happy that he had not even noticed my tardiness—but, for that matter. I walked in the clouds all the afternoon, and noticed nothing whatever that happened at his wedding, so we are quits on that score.

Dorothy and I will be married in September, and Uncle William, who insists that his "good management" brought it all about, has promised to set us up with a carriage of our own on the day of the wedding.

J. Pounds.

THEN AND NOW.

The Tale of a Love that was Lost.

"Am I to understand, then, that you refuse to marry me?"

"Yes, that is what you are to understand," gravely, but with a suspicion of something like mirth in her eyes.

"May I ask why, then?"

"Because I don't love you," she said airily, "that is why, a very simple reason, no doubt, you will say, but one that carries a great deal of weight, with me."

"You could not," he remarked, "have said that three years ago.

"You loved me *then*." It was a cowardly, nay cruel thing to say, but his mood was bitter.

She flushed, stung by his tone, but looking up into his face with brave eyes, answered quietly, "You are right, I could not." Then, she shuddered inwardly, to think what she had suffered on account of this man. And now, did she feel anything but rather a wild desire to laugh in his face?

"Great Heaven," said he, "I wish I had known then."

"Known what?" said she, and something leapt into her eyes—was it anger, or merely contempt? but he said with a tremble in his voice:

"Known that you loved me."

"Is that quite honest?" she said rather huskily. "Did you not know that I, a very young and ignorant girl"—then stopped, finding a difficulty in going on. He couldn't look into those clear and somewhat scornful eyes, and say he hadn't known only too well that she had loved him, so he remained silent.

"However," she went on, in quite a cold tone, "it was only a girl's fancy after all, as I very soon found out when you went away, and now," blithely, "it doesn't matter in the least," smiling into his face, "and—shall we talk of something else?"

"It evidently doesn't matter," he said gloomily, pulling at his moustache, "and this subject at present interests me very much."

Like a man he was beginning to think that he was the one who had cause for offence. But she, thinking of the days and nights of misery she had passed, and thanking Heaven at the same time, that he would never know what she had suffered, was rather enjoying the process of turning the tables on the man, which I am afraid was cruel of her.

So she began to hum a little tune softly, under her breath.

He turned round upon her in a moment, his eyes flashing.

"And you can actually sing," he said passionately, "and after all was I to blame, it was more my misfortune than my fault that I——" then he paused.

"That you didn't find out then, that I was as nice as I am," she said flippantly. "I quite agree with you at any rate," she went on, "that it was a great misfortune not to have found *that* out!"

"Sometimes mistakes can be remedied," he questioned.

"Sometimes," she said, "but not, I'm afraid in this case."

"If you were to marry me," he said, smiling and stretching out his hands to her, where she stood in front of him so tantalisingly calm and self-possessed, and so infinitely attractive, "I know I could make you happy."

All his ill temper had vanished now, he was so very much in earnest.

She looked at him, not unkindly, "It is a pity," she said musingly, and half relentingly, it was such an irony of Fate that things had turned out like this *now*. What would she not have given to have heard those words of his, to have seen that look in his eyes, three years ago.

But she was determined, with the memory of those years in her mind, not to let anything he could say touch her, although she was really sorry for him, but all feeling for him except pure friendliness had passed away long ago.

"It is not too late to mend matters, is it?" he went on imploringly. "Just think what our lives would be."

He looked so handsome standing there, his dark eyes looking into hers, those eyes she used to love so much, his strong, straight figure leaning lightly against the gate, that she turned her head away, she felt as if she would rather not look at him.

"Yes, it is too late," she answered, "much too late, it

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would never do now. I know it quite well, besides"—she paused, and a half smile came over her face.

He saw it, and his eyes flamed at once, as a thought struck him.

"I believe there is someone else," he said. *That* had never struck him until this moment, a man thinks if a woman has once loved him, she will always do so, whatever *he* may do.

"Perhaps there is," she said.

"I might have known it," he said bitterly, his face clouding over and his clenched hands falling at his sides, "That is so like a woman."

"So like a man, you mean," she retorted, "to think that a woman ought always to feel just as he feels, and *when* he feels, to dance when he pulls the string! Yes," she continued, her voice changing, her blue eyes melting, not with feeling for the present moment, but for that far off three years ago. "Yes, I did love you, Mark, in those days, loved you with all my heart. I used to long for just a sight of you, and feel miserable for days if I had missed you when you came to see us." Her voice had grown tender, and her eyes gazed into the far-off haze of the summer morning. "Ah!" turning suddenly upon him with eyes in which a mist of tears had gathered, "a man little knows what he is doing when he throws away love like that."

"But how could I tell?" he said wildly, "how could I know? Oh, dearest, do have some mercy upon me, I never knew you cared so much."

He knew that only the fact that it had all passed away made it possible for her to be telling him this now, and he also realised at last that this was the end.

"I am so sorry, believe me, Mark," she said, "that it has all turned out like this, but it is quite, quite, impossible now."

That "now" always maddened him. He bit his lip. "Well, there is no manner of use, I suppose, in prolonging this discussion," he said. "Good-bye, Angela," and he tried to smile in her face, "I hope you will always be happy, though you and I are not going to pass our lives together."

Her eyes were full of tears now, as she held out her hands. She couldn't speak. If things had only been different, if she could only have said "yes" now. How she wished she could. He took her hands in both of his, pressed his lips to her forehead, and was gone down the road the next minute.

"Poor fellow," she said sobbing, "but it was his own fault."

Then she turned and went in the opposite direction over the fields to her home.

* * * * *

Three years ago Ferrers had been staying at Merelands with some cousins of Angela's, who were also his cousins. He had been greatly taken with her, but then he lived in a chronic state of falling in love, or thinking he was in love, with most of the pretty women he came across. And he was always looked upon as a man who would never marry. Still, he really did fall in love with Angela, and for a time contemplated asking her to share his very large income and his ancestral home.

But as time went on, he, as he always did in the long run, could not make up his mind to take the fatal plunge, little knowing that he would never be so near happiness again. So he deliberately, and of his own free will, thrust it from him, half fearing that he had made a fool of himself by letting her go, and sincerely hoping that he hadn't.

As for Angela, all the sunshine went out of her life when Mark went away, and for many a day she suffered terribly. But she kept her sorrow to herself, as girls have a way of doing, and no one ever guessed, she thought and hoped, that her life had been one of torture because of this man.

But one there was who did guess; he guessed because of his own love for Angela, which had always lain dormant in his nature, but it was there all the same, strong and true, and in the days of her struggle and distress, he was always at hand, striving, as best he might, to help and befriend her; and in the end he was rewarded, and Angela felt what it would be like to have a man ever ready to devote himself to gratifying her lightest wish, and to rely on, to shield her from trouble.

She thought she should never love again in the same way she had loved Mark Ferrers, and perhaps she never did, but fortunately there are many different kinds of love, and many different ways of loving, and the best and most lasting are not always the most passionate.

So when she met Ferrers again after three years, she was more than half engaged to Hubert Langdon. As for Mark, he had been struck by her much developed and improved beauty. He was a man who was most susceptible to beauty in any shape or form, and this time he had no doubt in his mind as to his feeling for her. He wondered a hundred times a day how he had ever had any doubt, and reviled his folly when he found out that it was all to no purpose; Angela, beyond being exceedingly friendly, had evidently no stronger feeling for him.

She met all his attempts at sentiment with a laugh and a jest, and succeeded in making him thoroughly miserable, poor man, for Mark Ferrers was at last genuinely in love. In the whole world, he thought, could there be a woman to compare to Angela. Such beauty, such a form, and such charm of manner. What an outrageous fool he had been to have passed this woman over when he actually had had the game in his own hands.

He had been thoroughly spoilt. Being left his own master at an early age, he had had only to wish for a thing and he got it. And now he thought the only thing that he had ever wanted really, or so it seemed to him, was denied him. And it had been his own fault, there was no one else to blame but himself. There lay the sting.

* * * * *

Years after, Angela Langdon and Mark Ferrers met again. He was then rather a gloomy, and somewhat discontented man. His marriage had not been a success, his wife caring more for his wealth and position than anything else; and as he was a man who had had an ardent desire to be loved for himself, and not his possessions, this scarcely concealed feeling of hers galled him bitterly.

Angela, on the other hand, had certainly chosen the better part, and was radiantly happy and content. Her husband and children idolised her, and there was no woman more liked and admired in London society.

They met at a ball during the season. "I am so glad to see you again," she said, with the old quick smile he knew so well.

"And you," he said, grasping her hand, and looking into her face with his dark, discontented eyes, "I see the world has treated you very well, you look splendid to-night."

"Yes, I am very happy," she said simply. "By the way, I hear you are coming to live quite close to us, I am so glad."

"Yes, I saw Park End was in the market," he said, "so I bought it. I always liked that part of the world." He paused, then went on, "I remember some very happy days spent there, but perhaps you have forgotten," rather bitterly.

"Oh, no, I remember, too," she said gravely, "and I am not one to forget old friends." And then her face broke into smiles as a tall, fair man crossed the room and came towards them.

"Have you forgotten, Angela," he said, looking down at her and smiling, "that you promised to go on to the Avondales?"

"No, I remember," she said, "but," turning to Ferrers, "did you two ever meet in the old days? This is the Mr. Ferrers, Hubert, who has bought Park End, you know."

So the two men talked commonplaces for a few minutes, and then he bore her off.

Mark looked after them moodily as they disappeared through the gay throng.

"What an idiotic fool I was," he muttered, "to lose all that."

So we throw away our happiness in this world, unthinkingly, for as it says somewhere in the words of the poet,

"Beauty is easy enough to win,
But one isn't loved every day."

V. M. Johnson.

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Poor Sir Caliban.

Which Tells of a Bitter Revenge.

CHAPTER I.

Mr. Pietersen's Scheme—and Another's.

"Wish you were not your father's daughter? Nonsense, Eileen!"

"From your point of view, perhaps; from mine—well, there is no need to repeat it."

"Now, Eileen, don't be so horribly rude!" said Cora Meade, smiling that uncomfortable, arctic smile of hers. "I'm afraid you don't rightly appreciate Sir Ughtred Armour. He is not, we know, everything that you and I would choose for a husband. I mean, that he's—well—he might be better looking; and—a little taller, and——"

"He is hideous! misshapen! impossible!" broke in Eileen Pietersen, her cheeks aflame. "But," she went on indignantly, "since you think so highly of him—why—marry him! for I will not! I give you free and full leave."

The two girls were in the prettiest room of the brand new Park Lane house of Rolf Pietersen, millionaire saloon proprietor from somewhere in the Western world.

Some six months before, he had sprung himsel fupont he social life of London.

But for once, social London was cold and unresponsive. Mr. Pietersen's undoubtedly heavy bank balance was not sufficient to purchase the necessary hall-mark. The man himself was of the nature of that "sow's ear" that could never, by any twist or turn of fortune, be fashioned into a "silk purse."

Plus the money, he was still the bar-keeper, and with all the average bar-keeper's undesirable qualities.

The mystery was how he came to have such a daughter, for Eileen Pietersen was one of those rare combinations, where form and nature are alike sweet and beautiful.

Not mawkishly so, for the self-confident poise of her shapely little head indicated evident capability, and a well-balanced will-power.

Cora Meade, her companion, is not so readily described. Dark of hair and swarthy of complexion, her eyes were of that shifty kind that never can look straight into your own.

She had, years before, been at a school in Germany with Eileen, who had never made a friend of her there, for reasons easy to be understood when their several natures are properly considered.

Eileen, therefore, was more surprised than gratified when Cora called upon her at the Carlton the week of her father's and her arrival in town from oversea. But Cora was of that limpet-like character that "sticks" in spite of everything.

A clever woman, she made herself almost a necessity to the new arrivals, although disappearing with mysterious regularity at noon of most days. How she lived, from what source she derived her income, the Pietersens had no idea. She always seemed to be fairly provided, and was certainly always well groomed, in the very latest tailor-made style.

Pietersen himself did not like her; like scarcely ever takes to like—they interfere with each other's little schemes.

The wealthy ex-bar-keeper's one ambition was to shine in good English society. This he hoped to accomplish through his beautiful daughter. But the "fairy prince," otherwise the "lord of high degree," was shy, and disinclined to take Pietersen, as well as that gentleman's child and heiress.

But for a strangely fortuitous circumstance (according to his own point of view), and just when he had almost made up his mind to quit England and to seek some less exacting social circle, either on the Continent of Europe or on the more distant Australian variety, fortune threw in his way a man strangely suited to his purposes.

Eileen and himself were wandering about county Northumberland in search of a vacant castle, or manor, or abbey, that the latter might buy or hire for a country seat.

Being one day at an old inn, they found the only sitting room occupied by a gentleman having his dinner. The people of the house seemed very deferential to him; this, in itself, rousing Pietersen's interest and curiosity.

Their own table being spread, the man of money opened the conversation with a query on the subject of his quest for a "place." This naturally led to an exchange of cards, Pietersen perceiving that the stranger was powerfully attracted by Eileen.

Sir Ughtred Armour, Bart., of Armour Chase, County Northumberland, had been, from his birth, the sport of fortune; in that he combined in his person all the father and daughter's pre-conceived notions of human ugliness and malformation.

Dwarfish, misshapen, hideous, he had brooded so long upon his enforced social isolation that when, as now, he encountered a lovely girl, sweet beyond any he had ever before seen, it was not wonderful that he should allow himself to forget in the sight of her his own disqualifications.

Pietersen was quick to perceive this, and to rapidly build upon it a scheme for working out his own ends.

Briefly, the trio, or rather the two men, got very friendly; the arrangement just before they separated being that Sir Ughtred should pay the Pietersens a visit in town a month from that date.

Even then Eileen, though she was not blind to the baronet's admiration, had no suspicion of her father's ultimate plans and intentions.

When, therefore, a month later, and while Cora Meade was staying a week with them at Cookham, up the river, Pietersen intimated to his daughter that he wished her to encourage Sir Ughtred by any and every means, her whole soul revolted against the suggestion, and she came to loath the very idea of the unnatural proposal.

They had only come up to town the morning of the conversation between Cora and Eileen; the very day, in fact, upon which Sir Ughtred was expected.

Like all immensely wealthy men, Rolf Pietersen had a private secretary.

In his case it was one Harold Blythe, a stalwart young Devonian, fresh from Oxford, and, six months before, tempted by Pietersen's splendid offer of £500 a year and nothing to do. A cadet of a poor, but good family, this seemed wealth beyond the dreams of avarice

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Somehow the millionaire failed to notice a growing friendliness between his secretary and his daughter. The cutest man is blind sometimes. But so it was, that Eileen, whose fate it had been never before to meet with one of young Blythe's attractive personality, responded, it may be said, almost naturally to his warm feeling for her.

Hence the very thought of an alliance with one like Sir Ughtred filled her with dismay, and a determination to rebel at all hazards.

From the very first moment of the baronet's arrival in Park Lane, Cora Meade let him see that *she* was not indisposed to give him an opportunity of making *her* chatelaine of Armour Chase. She knew, only too well, Pietersen's plans, and so exercised her wiles when *tête-à-tête* with her victim, and when the master of the house was abroad or occupied elsewhere.

It was the last day of Cora's visit, and at the breakfast table Pietersen had expressed himself in strong terms with reference to the absence thereat of Eileen.

That Harold Blythe was also an absentee did not trouble him much, as the previous evening the secretary had requested leave for a few days to visit his home.

Almost immediately after obtaining permission he had packed and left the house.

"Sir Ughtred," said Cora, boldly, in spite of Pietersen's presence. "Isn't this a lovely day for a drive?"

But the insinuative remark fell flat.

"Yes," replied the baronet. "I arranged last night, after much persuasion, and on the condition of fine weather, to drive Miss Pietersen to Richmond."

"Oh!" snapped Cora, somewhat unguardedly.

"Well," remarked Pietersen, "We will see what Eileen has to say about it," and he told the butler to summon his daughter's maid.

In five minutes the butler returned.

"Fernshaw" (the maid) "is not to be found, sir!"

"Not to be found! But she must be found!"

"And, sir," continued the butler hesitatingly, "Miss Pietersen—so the housekeeper has heard from the milkman—Miss Pietersen went out this morning about seven, with Fernshaw, and hasn't come back yet, sir."

The words that rose to Pietersen's lips were not uttered then, for before he could speak, a footman brought in a telegram.

Reading it, he tore it into shreds, and shouting in his old Western manner, "She's married that skunk Blythe!" sat stupidly staring at the man who had given him the wire.

The one to take the news most curiously was Sir Ughtred. It was a severe blow to him, and he might have been expected to say and do something that would express his disappointment.

That which he really did puzzled Pietersen, and caused Cora to experience a feeling of uncomfortable uncertainty as to what he actually meant.

Calling the butler to his side he gave some orders with regard to the packing of his traps and their conveyance to Euston.

Then, without a word to Pietersen, who, ignorant of what was correct, did not resent it, Sir Ughtred just looked keenly and in a contemplative sort of way at Cora for a second or two, and, bowing gravely to her, left the room.

It showed Pietersen's short-sightedness when, Sir Ughtred gone, he turned fiercely to Cora, and accused her of being an aider and abettor in his daughter's elopement.

"You wanted the titled little monster for yourself!" he cried, "but if you *do* succeed in getting him, my best wish for you is that he'll lead you such a dance that you'll never have a minute's peace till the day of your death!"

CHAPTER II.

The Little Tea-Shop off Piccadilly.

The *habitues* of the place had been curiously puzzled as to what had become of the fair proprietress for the space of one whole week.

She was so in the habit of mixing, in a pleasantly familiar way, with her patrons, that her sudden absence created more than the usual "storm in a teacup."

The "neat handed Phyllises of the establishment" were all very well, but they did not satisfy "society," especially the male portion of it; they sighed for the geisha in chief.

"Cora Meade," declared one peculiarly idle exquisite, with a pretty talent for epigram, "is one of the cleverest little women I know," which certainly wasn't saying much, "and deucedly handsome too, don't you know!"

The lady undoubtedly answered to the gentleman's somewhat florid description of her, though character experts might possibly, and with reason, have felt inclined to call her cleverness by another, and not quite so polite a name.

The morning after the Park Lane incident, on the stroke of "one," in fact, the lady in question sat in her own private snuggery at the extreme rear of the premises, reading over, for the twentieth time, and with every facial sign of semi-satisfied bewilderment, a letter of no great length, but one evidently to be taken, as it was written, seriously.

"Why should he ask to see me?—Why should he?" and the glitter in Cora's steely-blue eyes, became python-like in its intensity and fascinative power.

"Bachelor's Club,
"July 17th, '01.

"Sir Ughtred Armour presents his compliments to Miss Cora Meade, and begs permission to call upon her to-day (Friday), between one and two, at her place of business.

"Sir Ughtred Armour particularly wishes Miss Meade to believe that the matter upon which he desires to see her, is one intimately concerning, and of considerable importance to herself."

"Something that intimately concerns *me*, and is of considerable importance to me!"

The swing and click of a door, followed by a peculiar halting tread in the outer shop.

Cora felt instinctively that she must face her fate, whatever it might be, must summon to her aid every artifice and device, with which she was so liberally endowed by nature, so that she might be equal to emergency or opportunity, as occasion offered.

Springing to her feet, she, as it were, pulled taut the cord of her determination, and smiting smartly one clenched hand into the open palm of the other, threw wide the half-glazed door of communication.

He stood there, in the maze of empty seats, and daintily appointed little tables, no business being ever done until well into the afternoon.

Cora's visitor could not but gaze in absolute admiration at her, as she gracefully posed in the doorway of her sanctum, on her lips a smile of welcome, hard to be doubted for its genuineness, so like was it to that which it purported to be.

"Miss Meade!" he said courteously inclining his head; and this with a dignity new to him, and altogether ungrotesque because of its impressive gravity. "You received my note?"

"Oh, yes, Sir Ughtred! and, though, of course, delighted to see you, am, I can assure you, quite at a loss to rightly interpret its meaning."

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"Yes?—If you will kindly favour me with just a few moments—this is not your busiest hour, I think—I fancy I shall be able to answer your question in a manner satisfactory not to myself only, but to you."

He spoke the last half dozen words with strangely insistent emphasis; the while that he limped into the cosily-furnished little room, and deliberately laid his hat upon the table.

Cora Meade had hitherto prided herself upon her superior strength of will-power; maintaining that no one—man or woman—could in any way influence her to do or say that which was directly opposed to her own inclination.

Before, however, another word was uttered, she had come to believe that, in this respect at any rate, she had at last met with her master.

"What are you doing? How dare you!" she cried, as the dwarf suddenly and swiftly strode to the door, locked it, and put the key in his pocket.

As he turned and faced her, still silent, his eyes seemed to her to burn into her very soul.

"This is intolerable! Sir Ughtred Armour! And—and I will call assistance! I—you—are a coward, sir! A mean, despicable coward! A——h!"

Her left hand was on the table supporting her, and he had gripped it by the wrist, until it stung again.

Then he spoke, not loudly, or as a man whose pulse throbs high, but dangerously low—almost in a whisper.

"Please to sit down," he said; but he did not let go her wrist, so that when seated, her eyes, howsoever unwillingly, were on a level with his.

"You must forgive me," he went on, "for this my rough wooing."

Her lesser will had now retired before the greater.

"Yes," she murmured, in veritable dream fashion, "I forgive you."

"That is well. To-morrow at this time you will close this place for ever, will proceed, absolutely unattended, to a church indicated on this paper, which I will leave with you. There I will meet you, and you will marry me."

"I will marry you."

"Without doubt or question?"

"Without doubt or question."

"We shall then, as man and wife, leave London for the north, for Armour Chase, the home a little bird has whispered to me that you, my well-beloved, esteem beyond all other."

"Beyond all other."

"I am glad! Because it is not given to every woman to realise her ideal."

It must not be imagined that Sir Ughtred hypnotised Cora Meade in the ordinary or better sense; he simply used his superior will-power to effect that which he desired.

As for Cora, frightened though she was at this dwarf's manner of making his marriage proposal, it so coincided with her own views that she the more readily inclined herself to a policy of non-resistance.

When, therefore, the baronet departed with a significant "Remember!" the first two afternoon customers entering from the street, as he went out into the hot sunshine, he left his strangely promised wife satisfied in a way, but with a lurking suspicion of something, which she could neither define nor understand.

CHAPTER III.

On the Way to the North.

Sir Ughtred and Lady Armour were alone in the "parlour" compartment the baronet had secured.

For the first thirty miles of the journey he had been absolutely silent. She had tried to open a conversation several times, but with no success. Then, once between the last occasion and Crewe, he just asked if she needed refreshment.

On her replying that she required nothing, he relapsed again into his former state.

It was immediately after leaving Crewe that he abruptly addressed her.

"Do you want to know why I have married you?"

His tone and manner frightened her again, and for the moment she could not answer him.

"Do you want to know?" he repeated, this time more harshly.

"I suppose so," she said at length.

"It is as well that you *should* know," he went on, quite ignoring her word of acquiescence. "In the first place, you came between me and Eileen Pietersen. No—no! Don't interrupt me. I *know* it. But for you, and your encouragement of young Blythe's love for Eileen, she would have been mine—mine! For I loved her—I love her still! I shall always love her! And I vowed, from the moment of the arrival of that telegram, to marry you, and to make you regret to your dying day the part you played in wrecking my heart."

"You lie!" she blazed out at him.

"I think not. Else, what meant all your oglings, and smilings at me! Were they not the desperate strugglings for my name! my title! my position! of a lady whose methods were not always above reproach?"

"You lie! I tell you."

"Well, if I do, it is too late now to mend matters, or alter my opinion.

"You have your wish, title, position, and a certain amount of wealth (the amount, I may tell you, is not large, for my family has been impoverished for the past two generations) well, I hope you will enjoy them. I warn you, however, that you will have to do so in my company alone, for, so long as I live, at any rate, Armour Chase will not see you beyond its boundaries."

"Why! You would make me a prisoner?"

"If you like to think so—yes; and as this is the very last time in our married life that Eileen Pietersen's name is to be mentioned between us, I will speak it to repeat that it is for your share in losing me my love, that I will make your life with me as miserable and as unbearable as it is possible for it to be."

* * * * * * *

Sir Ughtred and Lady Armour do not visit. He gives out that his wife is an invalid, and that, though it does not satisfy the curiosity of the country-side, settles the matter from his own point of view. To all inquiries he replies: "Thanks! Lady Armour is the same as usual," and there is an end of it.

* * * * * * *

Mr. Harold Blythe, private secretary to a Cabinet Minister is, with his lovely wife, a *persona grata* in London society.

But that happened after Mr. Peiterson's return to the scene of his money-making. Then the latter married again (for he declined absolutely to recognise his daughter or her husband) and was (according to a recent newspaper report) shot in a dispute with a kindred spirit, in a Chicago club.

It is on the cards that, after all, Eileen and her husband may yet enjoy the ex-barkeeper's millions, for the American Minister to this country is moving on their behalf, both Harold and Eileen being great favourites of his.

Ralph Enderby.

Lady: "I don't like this picture as well as I did the last one you took of me." Photographer: "Ah, madam, I have not the artistic taste that I had when I was young; and, besides, my camera is getting old."

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OUR NEW SERIAL.

OUT OF GREAT TRIBULATION.

By HENRY FARMER.

Author of "Fettered Lives," "As a Man Sows," "In the Grip of the Law," etc.

The First few Chapters in Brief.

JOHN MANSFIELD, a wealthy banker, Esther, his only child, Alec Scarsdale, his confidential clerk, and Seaton Revelle, a gentleman who had made the banker's acquaintance on the Continent, are seated together under the verandah of Mr. Mansfield's house, partaking of afternoon tea.

"This afternoon an utter stranger called upon me—a bearded, sunburnt fellow, just home from South Africa. . . . and took from round his waist a money-belt stuffed with bank-notes and diamonds, and wanted me to take charge of it. . . . He was so persistent that I agreed to lock the belt in my safe and return it to him on Monday," the banker remarked.

"Extraordinary!" said Seaton Revelle. "Easily won, they say, easily lost."

Shortly afterwards Revelle writes a letter to a Benjamin Beard in London, which he posts himself. During his absence, Alec Scarsdale, who is treated by the banker almost as his own son, tells Mr. Mansfield of his love for Esther, and, with tears in his eyes, the old man gives the pair his fondest blessing.

The next afternoon there is a meeting in the woods near to the banker's house, between Seaton Revelle and a gentleman from London named Benjamin Beard. A whispered conversation takes place, and a little packet of powder passes into Revelle's possession.

"Half of that, Marquis, is quite sufficient to induce sleep," says Benny. A few more confidences, then, "Ta-ta, Marquis, till to-night." Revelle answers "Till to-night, Benny."

Later in the evening Mr. Mansfield, Scarsdale, and Revelle are seated in the smoking-room, enjoying cigars.

"Alec," said the banker, "it's about time I had my night-cap. Be a good fellow and mix it for me—you know my dose."

Scarsdale mixes drinks for all three.

A few minutes later, Revelle manages to drop some powder into the banker's glass.

"Well, gentlemen," presently remarks the banker, "I don't know how you feel, but I'm feeling remarkably sleepy."

Late that night a figure cycles up to "The Woodlands," and waits below the dining-room windows.

Suddenly the window is noiselessly opened. "The old man's sleeping like a log, I've got the key." The voice was Revelle's and his listener, Benny. Quietly the two men steal to the safe, unlock it, and extract the belt. Suddenly footsteps are heard descending the stairs. An instant later, and Scarsdale, fully dressed, enters the room with a candle. But a tremendous blow from Revelle knocks him senseless.

"Go, Benny, go!" Revelle urges, "ride like the devil, I'm going to raise the alarm—it's my only chance."

To put the key in Scarsdale's hand, and the remaining half of the powder in his waistcoat pocket is the work of a moment.

While Revelle is still bending over Scarsdale's prostrate body, the servants rush in, alarmed by Revelle's shouts. "One's escaped, but I've got the other," cries Seaton Revelle.

It was past four o'clock in the morning when Scarsdale was marched to the police-station, Esther alone believing him innocent, although the key and powder were found in his possession.

Next day the crime is the one topic of conversation in the district. In the "Crown and Cushion" no doubt is entertained that Scarsdale is guilty, but where is the other man?

Just then a stranger enters and the landlord eyes him suspiciously and secretly sends for the police. Two constables arrive.

But the suspicious stranger turns out to be Mr. Crump, late Chief Inspector of Scotland Yard, who had come down to make a few inquiries for his personal satisfaction, prior to attending the great trial in London.

Meanwhile, a new character appears on the scene. This is police-constable Tom Jackson, once an employé at Mr. Mansfield's bank, whom Scarsdale had saved from becoming a thief in a moment of temptation. He resolves to do what little he can to redeem his debt of gratitude, so manages to visit Scarsdale in prison, and to convey short notes from Alec to Esther, protesting his innocence, and Esther's answer, swearing that nothing shall shake her love and her belief.

The great trial comes on. Mr. Mansfield and Seaton Revelle are, of course, present to give evidence. Mr. Crump is also there, a retiring figure in the gallery. Not far from him sits Benny, whose anxiety compelled him to come and listen to the evidence. Everything is against Scarsdale. Revelle never falters in his lying evidence. Subsequently the verdict is given as "Guilty," and a sentence of sixteen years penal servitude is passed.

Suddenly the prisoner turns towards a certain spot in the gallery, and pointing to a crouching figure seated there, shrieked, "There, there—that man, that man. Let him speak, let him prove my innocence!"

Almost simultaneously with his action, Crump turned his head sharply round, and discovered a terror-stricken face vainly striving to conceal its emotion. The face is Benny's.

Shortly afterwards, Mr. Crump visits Miss Mansfield. He asks several questions regarding Revelle, and subsequently shows Esther a portrait, which he asks her to impress upon her mind, and should she ever meet the man whose photograph it is, to let him know at once. The picture is an excellent likeness of Benny.

Several months elapse, during which Revelle takes a large house close to the banker's home at Waring. Most of this time, Esther had spent on the Continent. It is a grey November day when the train bearing Esther and her father enters Warham station. Revelle is on the platform waiting for a friend. His friend alights, and, as he does so, Revelle catches sight of the banker and his daughter. He hastens to their side and introduces his friend as Mr. Faversham. As Esther sees the new comer, she starts back violently, but quickly regains her composure. His face was the face of the photograph.

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CHAPTER XI.
The Face of the Photograph.

With a fierce effort Esther regained her self-control; but her heart was throbbing madly. She had never doubted Crump's kindliness; but there had been moments during the past weary months when she had been unable to conquer a feeling of hopelessness, and her faith in the little man's ability had wavered. At the time he had not told her why he wished her to impress the photograph on her memory; but now something that he had evidently anticipated, had happened. She felt, somehow, that a step forward, if only a little one, had been made at last. The past inaction had been a terrible strain. She had set herself a task—to seek for proof of the innocence of the man she loved. She might be a weak woman, but a woman, strengthened by love, is not to be despised. And now, at last, something had happened!

"I hope I see you well, Miss Mansfield!" said the dapper little man whom Revelle had introduced as Mr. Faversham; then, after suffering his eyes to rest for an instant on her face he shifted them elsewhere, and looked a trifle uneasy.

"Are you staying here for any time, Mr. Faversham?" asked Esther quietly.

"Well, my old friend Revelle has been good enough to ask me to stop as long as I please."

Esther turned to Revelle.

"In that case, Mr. Revelle, I hope you will bring Mr. Faversham to call on us."

"I shall be delighted!"

Then, having introduced Mr. Faversham to Mr. Mansfield, and after an exchange of a few commonplace remarks, Revelle escorted the banker and Esther to their brougham, and afterwards embarked with his friend in an exceedingly smart dog-cart. He flung half-a-crown to the porter who had been standing at the cob's head, and who promptly touched his cap with a tremendous amount of respect.

As the cart rattled away from the station, Revelle turned to his companion with a laugh.

"Well, Benny, how are you after all this time?"

"First-rate, Marquis!"

"You'll be pleased with my little place, Benny. Nothing ostentatious, but very natty and compact. What do you think of my turn-out?"

Revelle smoothed the glossy flank of the cob with his whip.

"Smart, Marquis, very smart; but you were always given that way. It doesn't seem nearly a year since I last saw you, does it, by Jove? You've been abroad, too, haven't you?"

"Yes," answered Revelle slowly. "I say, what do you think of Miss Mansfield?"

Benjamin Beard shifted in his seat a little uneasily.

"Very charming, very nice, and all that; but I wish you hadn't introduced me. There was a look in her eyes—a sort of I-haven't-forgotten-him look—that's sticking in my throat, Marquis! Of course, I know it was either you or him; but I'm sorry, deuced sorry, for that girl!"

Revelle touched up the cob with the whip.

"She is beginning to get over it!" he said thoughtfully, "I've seen a good bit of her since I parted from you. We are quite good friends again, I assure you!"

Esther Mansfield had played her part well.

Benny glanced at him out of the corners of his eyes.

"You think you're going to succeed there?"

"I do," was the deliberate answer, "but patience and time are wanted, and in the meantime a fellow must live. That's one of the things I want to talk to you about. There's no immediate hurry; but, at the same time, I don't believe in putting things off to the last moment!"

"Quite so!" said Benny; then, after a pause, "you'll have all your work cut out for you, if you mean to win the banker's daughter. You've a wonderful way with the women, Marquis; but somehow I fancy that she hasn't forgotten him, and isn't going to forget him."

"Perhaps!" said Revelle slowly. "But I personally don't think there's anything to stop me. I——"

He stopped abruptly. The cob demanded all his attention. The animal had suddenly swerved to one side; then bolted forward at a breakneck speed. Benny held his breath, and clutched hold of the seat. But Revelle knew how to handle the ribbons, and his muscles were as strong as steel. He loved to prove his mastery over man and beast. Setting his teeth, he gathered in the reins.

"You would, you beauty, would you?"

For a few moments the cob had the best of it. Then Revelle got him in hand. Snatching up the whip, he savagely thrashed the animal till it reared and snorted with pain, and Benny wished most sincerely that he was walking instead of riding.

"That will teach you to try your little games on with me! Benny, did you see what made the brute shy?"

The pace was still considerable. Benny was all right on a bicycle; but he was out of his element now. He was clinging on for dear life. His answer came jerkily.

"A woman—just caught a glimpse of her—standing by—that stile. Here, Marquis, for mercy's sake, steady on with that whip! Do—you—want to—chuck me out—or break—my blooming neck!"

"Trust me! I'm going to read this brute a lesson!"

"Yes, exactly—but not at the expense of your—and my neck! Confound it all! I—I'd as soon be in one of your infernal—balloons!"

"All right, old chap!"

A last vicious cut with the whip, and, slackening the reins a little, Revelle sent the cob forward at a rattling but steadier pace. Benny breathed more freely. Glancing at Revelle, he noted the tightly compressed lips and the flash of his keen eyes. There was no doubt about it that the Marquis was not a man to be trifled with. In the struggle for the mastery, he had dropped the mask he usually wore, and cruelty as well as strength showed on the handsome face.

"A woman, Benny? What sort of woman?"

"I only caught a glimpse of her; she was dressed in black. If I were you, I'd sell that cob of yours, and go in for a governess cart and a pony!"

"Benny, there's a strong dash of the old woman about you. Here we are! This is my little shanty!"

The Firs was a very charming little shanty, standing some distance from the road, and nestling among trees. A groom took the trap round to the stables. A smart boy in buttons opened the door. Benny inwardly remarked that the Marquis was doing things in tip-top style, as he glanced round the small, but artistically furnished hall.

"Anyone called, Smithers," said Revelle to the buttons, "whilst I've been out?"

"Only a person, sir, who left this card, and said he would take the liberty of calling some other time!"

Smithers presented a card on a salver. Revelle glanced at it carelessly. It was inscribed thus:

"Mr. William Penworthy, Horticultural Specialist and Landscape-Gardener. Estimates Free."

Revelle flung aside the card with a gesture of impatience; then rang a bell. Railton, the silent valet with expressionless features, entered.

"Take Mr. Faversham's bag to his room, Railton!"

The valet obeyed noiselessly.

"He's worth his weight in gold, that fellow!" said Revelle, addressing his companion.

Benny said nothing, but he inwardly winced. He was beginning to feel jealous of the silent Railton, otherwise Tomlinson.

The woman who had caused Revelle's spirited cob to shy, still stood by the stile that, set back in a thick edge, remained invisible to anyone coming along the road till almost on a level with it—a woman from whose faded face a former prettiness seemed to have been washed out. She had been leaning on the stile, staring dully in front of her with a lifeless, spiritless gaze, when the trap had dashed past. She had only caught a momentary glimpse of the occupants; but for an instant her dull eyes had brightened with a look of shadowy terror.

"It was like him!" she had whispered, with a little shiver.

When, at last, she moved away from the stile, her destination was Woodlands

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The woman was Vance, one of the parlour-maids attached to John Mansfield's establishment, and it was her "afternoon out." It was her way on these occasions to wander listlessly into the country, and, reaching some gate or stile, to lean upon it, staring dully in front of her, like a woman whose soul had been crushed or numbed by some great shock, and had never properly awakened since!

When Esther and her father reached Woodlands, a heap of belated correspondence awaited them. A warm flush of excitement was still upon Esther's cheeks, and Mrs. Tilley, the kindly old housekeeper, who had welcomed her back as a mother might have welcomed a favourite daughter, had gone her way rejoicing to think that Miss Esther was looking far more like her old self than she had ever dared to hope.

John Mansfield, business man that he was, promptly turned his attention to the correspondence.

"Esther, my dear," he said, handing her a number of notes and letters that he had sorted out, "these are for you!"

Esther quickly scanned the envelopes. The flush deepened at the sight of a familiar handwriting—Crump's! She hurried away to her own room and opened the envelope there.

"DEAR MISS MANSFIELD,—I hope you are none the worse for your journey. I am in the neighbourhood on business. If you are not too tired, could you meet me at six this evening, by the Warham reservoir. I ought to come to you, I know; but you will forgive my apparent rudeness. But don't come if you are tired, please. I will arrange a meeting for some other time.—Yours most faithfully, shall we say, WILLIAM PENWORTHY?"

But Esther was not too tired! The shadows of dusk were deepening as she passed from the bridle-path on to the bank of the reservoir, and saw a homely little figure standing, its back turned, staring across the water.

When Crump turned at her approach, despite the dimness of the light, she was conscious of a great change in his personal appearance.

He took her hand in both his own, and wrung it warmly, his small, bright eyes beaming kindliness and sympathy.

"My dear young lady!" he said, "I *am* glad to see you again!"

And he repeated the words several times, wringing her hand all the while.

"And you're looking better, ever so much better, than when I last saw you, I am very thankful to say!"

He gave a little chuckle.

"Would you have known me, if you had come upon me unexpectedly?"

When Esther had last seen him, he was clean shaved. Now he was wearing a rather scrubby beard and moustache. Had he raised his hat, one would have realised that the bald spot, lasting memento of a burglar's jemmy, had vanished entirely. It was cleverly concealed by a *toupet*. The effect of beard and moustache had been to give him an older look.

"No!" said Esther, "I shouldn't!"

"That is good!" said the little man, "I have the greatest respect for the keen-sightedness of your sex. Now, have you anything to tell me?"

"Yes!" in her excitement, she clutched his arm, "Yes, I've seen the man whose photograph you showed me!"

"Ah! With Mr. Seaton Revelle?"

The little man's eyes twinkled brightly as he asked the question.

"Yes! He introduced me to him—a Mr. Faversham. He is staying with Mr. Revelle!"

"Ah, indeed!"

Crump suppressed a feeling of pardonable pride. A certain conclusion that he had jumped at some time ago, had proved correct.

"Is there," whispered Esther, "do you think that there is more hope now?"

"My dear young lady," said the little man gently, "I must not hold out too great hopes; but, this much—it is a step in the right direction: And now, I'm going to ask you to do me a favour. Can you manage to give me some little job in connection with your garden? You will find that I shall acquit myself fairly well. It would give me opportunity to consult with you without attracting undue attention. And also you might recommend me to Mr. Revelle. He has just taken The Firs. The grounds at the back are full of promise, and I should very much like to have the task of laying them out. I oughtn't to blow my own trumpet; but I flatter myself that I am not without taste in these matters. As a young man I made a mistake in the choice of my vocation!"

And the little man firmly believed it.

"Yes!" said Esther, "I can do this. I'll speak to my father this evening about our garden!"

"Thank you very much. And now I must be going. I've got to meet a young rascal of a nephew of mine and a comrade of his. You know Tom Jackson, the young constable?"

"Yes! Indeed, yes!"

"He's a good lad, and so is my young nephew Freddie—also in the Force. You see, I'm an old fellow, Miss Mansfield, and when I was in active service I had plenty of men at my command. It's different now. I'm only a private individual. I'm taking these two lads—Freddie, bless him! I've nursed him on my knees many a time—into my confidence. They're good lads, and I can trust them. And now I must really be off. You know where to write to me. God bless you!"

Crump's way lay past The Firs.

"She's a splendid girl!" he said to himself as he was almost on a level with the drive leading to Revelle's new residence. "She's displaying real fortitude. Yes, yes! I think we have made an advance to-day!"

At that moment a man emerged from the drive, and swinging round sharply, all but collided with Crump. It was quite dark now.

"I beg your pardon!" said the man, in a low, obsequious voice, "I really beg your pardon!"

"Granted!"

The man brushed past.

"I know that voice!" muttered Crump as he went on his way; then he stopped dead.

He possessed a wonderful memory. He gave a low whistle. Freddie and Tom Jackson must wait. He turned on his heels and crept quietly after the man who had passed him.

"I may be wrong, but that voice was remarkably like that fellow Tomlinson's, who got seven years for his share in the Lancaster jewel robbery. I must make certain of this. If I'm right, then The Firs is housing a nice trio of rascals. This business is getting more and more interesting. But, if it is Tomlinson—and I don't think I'm wrong—I shall have to be very careful indeed—it's a good many years ago now; but I don't suppose he's forgotten Mr. Duffy!"

The little man chuckled noiselessly.

"Hullo! He's bound for Woodlands!"

The lamp at the entrance of the drive to the banker's house was lighted. The man whom Crump was shadowing had passed through its glare.

"I must have a good look at his face when he comes back!"

Crump waited for a moment; then quietly entered the drive, and slipped into a shrubbery close to the lamp.

Railton was the bearer of a note from Seaton Revelle to Miss Mansfield. A few moments later he returned. The lamp-light fell full upon him.

"That's Tomlinson right enough!" said Crump to himself. "We are progressing indeed!"

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CHAPTER XII.

Gentleman Jack's Story, as Told to Convict 35T.

From the cell to the parade ground, from the parade ground to the quarries; from the quarries back to the prison; in fact, the whole ghastly and monotonous routine of prison life was, slowly but insidiously, making itself felt on Alec Scarsdale. The longing to escape, the dream that his feverish brain had given birth to one weary night in the cell, had grown in intensity. He was always calculating out the possibilities—calculations that ultimately buoyed him up with hope, and plunged him into abyssmal despair. He was horribly conscious of the fact that he was deteriorating, and gradually losing his self-command. Another thought that was forcing itself upon him, and made him cling wildly to the idea of escape, was the grim fancy that he could not live through the terrible sentence imposed upon him; or, even if his body endured, his mind must give way under the strain.

The prison bell was jangling out!

Scarsdale, convict 35 T, rose from his hard bed, and had scarcely donned his clothes when the corridors outside the cells re-echoed with the tramp of warders as they hurried along, shouting out the words "Brooms in!" Mechanically he stooped down and passing his hand under the narrow opening at the bottom of the door, drew in the little cocoa-nut fibre brush known as the broom. Equally mechanically he swept out the cell.

A moment later the door was unlocked and a warder looked in.

"Now then, show your bedding" he cried coarsely, "and don't take a day and a night over it! Do you think you are the only convict in this establishment?"

Scarsdale silently held up the sheets for inspection; then, dropping them on the floor, picked up his metal wash-bowl, and stepping out into the corridor, emptied it into the metal bucket that was being borne past by two convicts.

"Will you hurry up, 35?" cried the warder.

Without a word, Scarsdale placed a tin mug, a wooden platter, and the inevitable broom outside, and then closed the cell door. Inwardly he was boiling with indignation. Every day it was the same. By abuse and petty tyranny, Assistant Warder Pettigrew seemed bent on making his life as unbearable as possible. Sometimes an almost irresistible longing had come over him to seize him by the throat, and shake the life out of him.

It is hard, perhaps, to realise, but it is a fact that a warder, without actually breaking the letter of the prison regulations, can, by petty tyranny, make a prisoner's life a hell on earth.

"The sulky brute," muttered Assistant-Warder Pettigrew, as he passed along the corridor. "One of your high-and-mighty gentleman-lags; but I'll learn him a lesson before I've done."

Reaching the next cell, the warder unlocked the door and repeated the order for bedding to be shown. Convict No. 36 T—a slim, well-built young fellow, of not more than twenty-nine, with a refined face and singularly delicate hands, not yet twisted out of shape and distorted by hard labour—was undergoing a sentence of ten years for forgery. Among the convicts he had earned himself the sobriquet of Gentleman Jack. He and Alec Scarsdale paraded side by side, and worked in the same gang. Already they had found opportunities of conversation when toiling in the quarries, and on Sundays when the prisoners are allowed to converse.

Scarsdale, as soon as Pettigrew had locked the door upon him, proceeded to neatly roll up his bedding, then placed it on an iron shelf. This done he sat down on a three-legged stool to await breakfast.

The unlocking of the door roused him from his thoughts. Assistant-Warder Pettigrew had again entered.

"Take in your breakfast!"

Then the warder glanced at the bedding. As Scarsdale took in his breakfast—an eight-ounce loaf, and some three-quarters of a pint of watery gruel in the tin mug—Pettigrew snatched the bedding from the iron shelf and scattered it on the floor.

"Now do it up properly; do you think you can do as you please? You ain't a cashier now; you're Convict No. 35 T, and the sooner you realise it the better."

The sallow skin turned red as the hot blood rushed to Scarsdale's face. There is nothing, perhaps, harder to endure than the tyranny of an inferior, and what added to the torture was the fact that Scarsdale realised that to complain was worse than useless. He would not be believed.

There was nothing to be done but to obey. With a malicious grin the warder left the cell and slammed to the door. Scarsdale ground his teeth as he again rolled up the bedding. Heaven knows he tried to be submissive enough, to endure silently, not because he was of a submissive nature, or one of those tame, invertebrate creatures who are incapable of resistance, but because it was the only way to qualify for a remission of the terrible term of imprisonment imposed upon him. (A prisoner obtaining the full number of good conduct marks is entitled to a remission, amounting to about one-fourth of the term of sentence.) For hope was not yet crushed out of him, and greater than hope was a growing longing for revenge, that prison misery only added to and fostered. He prayed that he might live through it all, to stand face to face with the man who had wronged him.

The bedding rolled up, Scarsdale had barely swallowed the wretched breakfast when the prison bell rang out for chapel. Again the warders hurried along the corridors, unlocking the doors, and the convicts, as the command to take one step forward and march rang out, stepped out of their cells, and filed along the corridors down iron staircases into the hall below, and from there into the chapel, where a short service was read. At the conclusion of the service the convicts, closely guarded by the officers, were marched in double file, into the parade ground—a barrack-like square, surrounded partly by prison buildings and partly by a massive wall, its summit bristling with iron spikes. Orders were hoarsely shouted out, and the convicts in dogged silence formed up into a number of working parties.

It was a grim sight—those silent lines of strangely-assorted humanity. Young fellows scarcely out of their teens, broken-down grey-haired old men, hardened gaol-birds and men of intellect and refinement stood side by side, and on nearly every face the weary, indescribable prison-look.

The working party—so called by the prison officials; convict gang by the prisoners—to which Scarsdale was attached, was composed of some thirty men. The man on his right was a respited murderer, with coarse features and a narrow receding forehead. He was a desperate character, and was dressed in "canaries"—the yellow convict dress worn by prisoners who have attempted to escape. Sid Baxter was not a pleasant neighbour.

Gentleman Jack was on Scarsdale's right.

It was only after every man had been searched from head to foot that the prison gates were unlocked, and the different parties, in close double-file, marched out. Each party was headed by "the rifleman"—an officer armed with loaded rifle, bayonet, and cutlass—while the officer-in-charge and an assistant-warder, armed with revolvers and cutlasses, brought up the rear.

Outside stretched a bleak, open country, part moor, part swamp, with here and there portions of reclaimed and rudely-cultivated land. In the distance, where the soil was rocky, were the convict quarries. Rising up at regular intervals, and standing out clearly against the leaden sky, were the look-out and signal stations, forming a complete cordon round the convict settlement.

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Outside the prison gates, resting on rails of a narrow gauge stood a convict train, the steam hissing from the small locomotive that was ready to drag a load of convicts some three miles, to where the fortress-building was being carried out. The small, open carriages—cages on wheels—were fitted with sliding gates of iron bars, chains passing along the exterior of these gates, and padlocked at each end of the carriage. At the end of each carriage was a platform, not unlike that of a Pullman car, for the warder.

The working party to which Scarsdale was attached did not enter the train, but tramped along a rough, uneven, convict-made road towards the home quarries. The man in the "canaries" marched next to Scarsdale.

It was that afternoon, while working away in the quarry, that Gentleman Jack told Scarsdale the story of how he had been sentenced to ten years' penal servitude. He had already served over two years, and had attained the rank of a second-class prisoner, as the yellow facings to his jacket, and the yellow badge with the registered number printed in black, signified. Convicts of the second and first-class are known as "tea-men," from the fact that they are allowed tea instead of gruel.

"Yes," said Gentleman Jack, with a glance at his hands, still delicate, and retaining their shape in spite of oakum-picking and quarrying and scrubbing of stone floors, "my hands got me into trouble. I wish to Heaven I could say that I was innocent, but I can't. But there was someone else more guilty than myself—someone who drove me to it. I'm not trying to excuse myself. If I had been stronger I should have resisted the temptation, and faced the trouble that I was in, like a man. But it's too late to be sorry now. And when I get out of this odius place, I suppose I shall have to fall back on my hands again. What chance"—he was speaking bitterly now—"has a 'lag' of making a fresh start, of trying to redeem the past?"

Scarsdale, glancing at his refined face, saw that it was working with emotion. The man's conscience had not yet been deadened by vile associates; there was yet a longing to make atonement. But would it still be so when his weary term of penal servitude was over? Or would he leave prison hardened and desperate—a modern Ishmael, his hand against everyone, everyone's hand against him?

"Don't speak like that," said Scarsdale, in a low voice, though inwardly he felt that the man was but echoing his own sentiments, "it's never too late to mend!"

The conversation was temporarily interrupted by the approach of the warder.

"Now, then, 35 and 36, do a bit of work for a change. This ain't the place for chin-music. Let me catch you at it again, and I'll have one of you shifted to another working party, and precious sharp!"

When he had moved away again, Gentleman Jack lowered his eye-lid at Scarsdale.

"His bark's worse than his bite," he said, speaking with motionless lips, "not like Pettigrew. He's not bad-hearted."

"You were going to tell me," said Scarsdale, "how you came to be here."

"Yes, I don't as a rule care to talk about it. But you—well, you are different from most here.

"It was the old story of cards," said Gentleman Jack, "playing for high stakes, losing, playing again in hopes of winning back what I had lost, losing again, and then getting desperate. To this day I believe the man—curse him—who induced me to play, tampered with the cards, or else he had the devil's luck. Oh, yes, he was a gentleman, and moved in high Society and all that, but it didn't prevent him being one of the biggest scoundrels alive. When I was head over ears in debt to him, he pressed me for money. I asked for time, and he only threatened to show me up. I was engaged to be married, and my father was dead against gambling and that sort of thing. Then my evil genius, half-jestingly, suggested that I should give him a cheque for the amount. I

"That—that man is my husband!"

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told him I was overdrawn at the bank. He plied me with drink—I had always been clever at imitating handwriting—and when I left him, he'd got a cheque for the amount with another man's name upon it. He swore he wouldn't present it for payment within the next three months. It was cashed the next day. Two days later I was arrested for forgery."

Gentleman Jack paused to wipe the perspiration from his forehead.

"I don't want to excuse myself, but if that man hadn't egged me on, driven me to it, I should have been a free man to-day!"

Scarsdale looked at him with a deep expression of compassion on his face.

"What was the scoundrel's name?"

Gentleman Jack rested his pick on the ground and leant on it.

"He's fairly well known in London," he said, hoarsely, "though few realise what his character is—he's too clever for that. His name's Seaton Revelle!

"Why, what's up? What's the matter?" cried Gentleman Jack, forgetting his surroundings for the moment, and staring in blank amazement at Scarsdale, who had let his pick fall to the ground with a crash, and whose face had undergone a sudden and indescribable change. Scarsdale did not speak, as if the mention of that man's name had numbed his faculties. But his brain was working fiercely, like that of a cataleptic, who, outwardly, presents all the appearances of death, yet inwardly lives and feels. What irony of Fate, what strange coincidence had brought it about that here, in the prison quarry, he should find himself side by side with another victim—for his reason told him that Gentleman Jack had been driven to err—of the man to whom all his misery was owing?

"Here," whispered Gentleman Jack, "lay hold of your pick. The screw's coming our way again."

When the warder passed, Scarsdale was hewing away mechanically. The man, glancing at him casually, did not notice the ghastly, strained expression on his face.

"What was it upset you?" whispered Gentleman Jack, when the warder had passed out of hearing. "Why, man, you went the colour of death!"

"Seaton Revelle," said Scarsdale, the words coming slowly from between his clenched teeth, "you say he tempted you to forgery. Seaton Revelle—oh, God, if I could only once meet him face to face!"

And his soiled hands tightened on the haft of the pick with a feverish grip.

"What, you know him!"

"Know him"—Scarsdale gave vent to a low laugh, a mirthless laugh almost horrible to hear—"but for him I should not be here. He worked out my ruin; he tore me away from the girl I loved; he degraded me in the eyes of the world; he swore away my liberty!"

The pent-up stream had burst its dam. He had given tongue to what in the loneliness of his cell, to what in the rock-bound quarry, had never ceased from haunting and torturing him. Till then he had never spoken to a soul of his past.

"What," hoarsely whispered Gentleman Jack, as his eyes dilated, "did he bring you to this?"

"Yes!"

CHAPTER XIII.

"That Man is My Husband!"

"Good afternoon, Miss Mansfield!"

Seaton Revelle had strolled up from The Firs to Woodlands. Benny had preferred not to accompany him, explaining that he felt uncomfortable, somehow, in Miss Mansfield's presence.

Esther, hatless, her hair touzled by the wind, was standing at the gates of the carriage drive with a little grey-headed, grey-bearded man, who was in the act of jotting something down in a note-book. He had not even looked up as Revelle approached, so interested did he seem in what he was writing.

Esther shook hands with Revelle. She could do so now without flinching.

"I'm very busy," she said, with a little laugh, "my father's given me his permission, and I'm going to have the whole of the front garden altered."

The little man looked up from his note-book, and pointed to a spot with his pencil.

"Rhododendrons we decided upon there, miss, didn't we?"

"Yes, Mr. Penworthy!"

The little man solemnly made a note.

"Mr. Penworthy," went on Esther, addressing Revelle, "is carrying out my ideas for me."

The little man looked up again, and raised his hat to Revelle.

"Yes, sir! I took the liberty of leaving my card on you the other day. If you should have anything in my line that you wanted doing, I should be very grateful if you would give me a trial. I feel confident that my work would give satisfaction. You've a very nice piece of ground at the back of The Firs, sir."

"I must think it over," answered Revelle.

"Thank you, sir. In case you should have mislaid my card, will you allow me?"

The little man had produced a card from his note-book.

"You will notice that 'Estimates are free.' Thank you, sir!"

Revelle accepted the card; then turned to Esther.

"Miss Mansfield, I've come to apologise at the last moment for my friend, Mr. Faversham. Your father was good enough to suggest that I should bring him to dinner to-night. He's altogether off colour to-day. I'm afraid it looks like influenza!"

Benny, at that particular moment, was looking most hale, and enjoying a cigar and whisky and soda.

"Most certainly. I am very sorry to hear that!"

"Good girl!" said Mr. Penworthy to himself as he studied his note-book, "brave girl. The manner in which she veils that broken heart of hers is admirable! And there are those who say women have no pluck!"

* * * * *

"Esther, my dear, would you, as a special favour, let us smoke our cigars in here to-night!"

Mansfield and Revelle, both in evening dress, had entered the drawing-room, to which Esther had retired after dinner. She had not heard the door open. At the sound of her father's voice she looked up with a start. There was a look of pain in her eyes. But a moment later she was smiling.

"You know you can, father!" she said. "You will have your coffee in here, too!"

"Revelle, I've a special brand of cigars that I want you to try, if you'll excuse me whilst I fetch them!"

The banker left the room.

Esther rose and rang the bell. Revelle sauntered up to a picture on the wall—a portrait of Esther as a child.

"This is very charming!" he said.

The door opened. Vance, the parlour-maid, stood, lifeless-eyed, on the threshold. Revelle's back was turned to her. She had not waited at table that night.

"Bring the coffee in here, please, Vance!"

"Yes, miss!"

The woman retired. Revelle turned.

"Miss Mansfield," he said, waiting till Esther was seated again, and then sitting down beside her, "I'm awfully glad you and your father are coming to my house-warming. I'm going to ask you to do me a great favour. I'm—er—a lonely old bachelor, would you honour me—I should be awfully obliged—by your acting as hostess?"

"I shall be very pleased!"

"Thank you awfully! It'll be quite an informal affair. It's exceedingly charitable of you to take pity on a forlorn old bachelor!"

The door opened. Vance, carrying a tray, entered.

"You might put it on the table, Vance!" said Esther.

Seaton Revelle saw the woman's face for the first time now. He was too late! Before he could swing round so as to hide his own face from her, the woman raised her spiritless eyes. They rested on his face, dilated.

Then there was a crash. The tray had fallen from her hands She was pointing at him.

"That—that man is my husband!"

(To be continued.)

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Marmalade and Love.

How Barstow Brown and Elviry Richards Came Together.

The last scarlet bar of the gorgeous autumn sunset was fading out behind the tall poplars along the country road when Barstow Brown's creaking old farm waggon turned the corner which led to his lonely and ill-kept home.

"There's the light burnin' already in Miss Elviry Richards' window," he commented. "It does git dark awful early nights now. Seems like hers is the cleanest kep' an the cheerfulest lamp in the whole village."

And indeed it did seem to illuminate with its friendly radiance the little one-story house by the roadside. It looked like a beacon—a star. It made Farmer Brown think in admiring but unformulated fashion of a steadfast love—pure, unwavering, brilliant. It attracted him. It drew him—the worn and harassed body and soul of him. Unconsciously he tightened the reins. But it was not until the plodding horses stood still in response, that he wondered whether he might venture in and what excuse he could give for his visit. Suddenly he lifted his head and sniffed—once, twice. Then he hurriedly twisted the reins around the whipstock and clambered down from the high seat. Swiftly, noiselessly, excuse and encouragement had come to him—in the guise of an odour at that.

"Marmalade! If she ain't a-makin' marmalade!" He was hurrying up the short path to the front door, at which he knocked. "I'll tell her I want the recipe for Susie Reilly to make some by. That's the ticket! Oh, Mis' Richards! I was just goin' home from the mill, when the nicest smell came floatin' down the road! Seemed 's if I was back in mother's again, an' she was puttin' up marmalade." He sighed, and moistened his lips at the recollection. "So I thought I'd come in an' find how you make it. Maybe Susie Reilly could make a pound or so!"

Forty placid and benignant summers had passed over the brown head of Elviry Richards, but where was the girl in her county who carried herself with more grace and dignity, and what matron could boast such a fresh complexion and bright eyes as she?

"To be sure!" she cried heartily. "Come in, Mr. Brown." She drew forward the best rocking chair, and he seated himself.

"'Tisn't much I need make, living alone as I do, but a good storeroom is a fine thing to fall back on. You'd need a lot in your house, I'm thinkin'. I'll give you the recipe with pleasure, an' a jar to take home for Susie to taste. How does she get on, Mr. Brown?"

Barstow Brown looked round the bright little room, at the shining glass lamp with the brightly-burning wick, which stood behind the row of freshly potted geranium slips in the recessed window, then back at the plump, white-aproned figure opposite.

"Not too well, Mis' Richards. She's kind of shiftless. It comes natural to some folks to be shiftless. Seems like the work allus keeps a bit ahead of her. Seems like she can't catch up with it. But she means well. Most shiftless folks means well. I got to be movin'." He rose reluctantly. "The young ones, they'll be a-missin' me."

"What now, an' you couldn't wait till I make you a cup of coffee? No? That's too bad. Wait till I get you the marmalade, anyhow. What's that? Could you come out to the kitchen while I'm a-gettin' it? Why, of course, Mr. Brown?"

Twittering and stepping briskly, Miss Elviry tripped ahead, and Barstow Brown plodded after. He was aghast at his own temerity, but the appetising smell of the marmalade drew him to the kitchen as the white brilliance of the lamp had drawn him to the parlour.

"My!" He breathed and stopped short. "This beats——" He was looking round the gayest, cosiest, most immaculate little kitchen he had ever beheld. From the black mirror of a stove, with its golden grin through the open draught, to the shining plates on the dresser, the row of orange filled glass jars on the table, the dish-pan that glittered like silver and the cat asleep on the braided mat, all things bespoke industry, energy, comfort.

Something in his attitude of timidity, in his look of wonder that was almost one of awe, in his neglected personal appearance, went straight to the woman's warm heart of Miss Elviry Richards. He had been such a spruce, good-looking fellow fifteen years ago! Her glance, which was keen if kindly, noted all things—the shirt, with the band all gone; the coat, with holes at the elbows; more than all, the hollows at his temples and in his cheeks. These—and the weak tears that came into his eyes! She busied herself writing out the recipe—and talking.

"It isn't any too easy, I expect, with only Susie. She never was a hand to look after children, an' there's three at your place. I expect it ain't been like home since—since Cyrilla went away."

Barstow Brown was silent. It had not been a happy home before Cyrilla died. But he could not tell Miss Richards that. No, nor anyone else. Only he had meant—had honourably meant—to ask Elviry to marry him before the pretty, painted, flippant little city girl had come down to the country town and taken his fickle heart captive.

"Here's the recipe, an' here's the jar. Yes, you must take the big one, an'—why—Barstow!"

For there was a look in his eyes she had not seen since those happy days before Cyrilla aired her city graces on the village.

"I'm probably a failure, Elviry," said Barstow Brown. "I don't know, but you'll turn me out when you hear what I've been wantin' to say ever since it would be right an' proper to talk that way. But the farm's a good one, an' the house could be made the best hereabouts if 'twas fixed up right, an' the children——"

"They're dear children!" declared Miss Elviry, and she meant it.

"Well, they like you awful well. You allus was a one to get round youngsters. I—I"—he dropped his eyes—"I think you know what I mean, Elviry—what I want!"

"Of course I do!" she cried cordially. "You want the recipe and the marmalade."

"No, Elviry! You know I want—you!"

"Well, you've got to take them if you take me!" Her tone was delightfully coquettish. "I have one in each hand!"

He stared at her, eager, half incredulous.

"Do you mean it—really? There's been others——"

"There's been others," Miss Elviry agreed complacently, "but—I haven't took any of 'em—have I? There—now, Barstow Brown! Do behave! I daresay I might get ready in three weeks, but—your horse will be about cramped with waitin'. Oh, Barstow, I didn't think 'twas in you to act so dreadfully silly! Do take care! Let me set down this jar of marmalade, anyway! There—now—go! It'll be nine o'clock when you get home—Barstow Brown!"

Reed Thomas.

The great Card Scene in
"The Confessions of Cynthia"
forms the subject of our next week's cover.

THE GREAT NAG-A-POR DIAMOND.

A Humorous Story of an Attempted Robbery.

"Scotland Yard,
May 15th, 1898.

"My dear Colonel—

Just a line to warn you that we have had private information of an impending visit to your neighbourhood by a particularly smart thief; probably attracted by the name of the great diamond. We don't know how the man will make the attempt; he may take the next house to your own and cultivate your acquaintance, or he may simply adopt the old-fashioned burglar's style of a visit by night; but the diamond is worth, I suppose, about £10,000, and the thief will not stand at a trifle. Shall I send you down a plain-clothes man for a week or two, or do you prefer to tackle the job yourself? We have not anything definite against the fellow, and wish to catch him red-handed if possible.—Yours faithfully,

"GEO. SUTCLIFFE."

Colonel Lambert's reply was brief, but decisive.

"Dear George," he wrote, "if I cannot capture this miserable scoundrel unaided, he is welcome to the Nag-a-por. Best wishes—glad to see you any time.

"W. J. L."

When he had written this characteristic note, he lighted a cigar and strolled into the garden to consider his plan of campaign.

It happened that his next door neighbour, who had only moved in a few days previously, was at that moment lounging upon a garden seat, smoking a short briar pipe.

"He may take the next house to your own," remembered the Colonel; "which suggests a possibility; and he's smoking a pipe out of doors, which makes it into a moral certainty."

If the gallant officer had felt any leaning towards mercy, this last atrocity banished it. In his opinion, a man, purporting to be a gentleman, who smoked out of doors, was little better than a deserter; the last-named being his outside limit of vice.

However, he made up his mind to get on speaking terms with the enemy. So he walked slowly along the garden-path, pacing from one end to the other, gazing straight before him, and occasionally uttering a hoarse, tentative sort of cough. His brilliant strategy was speedily successful.

"Good-morning, sir," said the man with the pipe, nodding across the quickset hedge.

"Br-r-r Jove!" muttered the Colonel, who was trembling all over, "I knew he would!" Then to his neighbour: "H'm—ha—of course—good morning!" he stammered, his face red with suppressed excitement. "I suppose you want—I mean you're after—that is—good-morning! Come across and have a dia—have a cigar with me."

"With pleasure, sir," was the ready reply of the stranger, who seemed rather puzzled by the strange embarrassment of the Colonel.

"Yes, you just come here," thought the latter, smiling grimly, "and if I don't plant a shell in your batteries in something less than five minutes, my name isn't Lambert."

For a moment, indeed, the simple-hearted old soldier hesitated. Was it fair that he, whom he knew to be one of the most skilful strategists of modern times, should set his strength against the pitiful cunning of a common thief? He hesitated, almost decided on mercy—and then he saw the briar pipe coming briskly up his garden walk. At the same moment he remembered the letter from Scotland Yard. There are some things a man—particularly a peppery old soldier—cannot forgive.

The two men sat down side by side. After a few careless remarks about the weather, made to throw the enemy off his guard, the Colonel negotiated a slight skirmish on the diamond question, turning the conversation to that subject with what he thought a decidedly smart flank movement.

"You're right, sir," he said. "The rain has—remarkably fine effects—glistens on the—the grass like—br-r-mph—*diamonds*!" gasping out the last word in purple-faced excitement.

"Yes," replied the stranger calmly; "extremely pretty."

"Like—br-r-mph—*diamonds!*" gasped the Colonel again.

"But far more beautiful," said the stranger, sucking obstinately at the unspeakable briar.

The Colonel crossed one leg very deliberately over the other, came back to his former position still more deliberately, and then suddenly gripped his knees round an imaginary saddle and flung himself headlong against the enemy.

"Talking of diamonds," he said, tugging his moustache fiercely, "you may have heard that I possess—er—rather—er—famous stone—the Great Nag-a-por?"

"A great comfort to you, no doubt!" was the quiet reply. As a matter of fact, the stranger appeared to be already quite tired of the subject.

But the Colonel struggled on with his conversational mines and masked batteries, to his own entire satisfaction, and all the time he affected an open-hearted simplicity, which he felt very foreign to his real nature. He began to feel a contempt for his adversary, which is never advisable. The ease with which he acquired his strategical victories made him reckless, so that presently he invited his new acquaintance indoors to see the famous diamond.

This invitation, which was readily accepted, was the first of many; in fact, quite a strong friendship, sincere on both sides to a certain extent, sprang up between the two men. Henderson proved to be a most companionable fellow, and, what was better than all, a willing listener, with a distinct partiality for Service anecdotes.

But although the Colonel was highly gratified with his new neighbour, he did not forget the purpose which had led him to form the acquaintance, nor did he forget that for a soldier to extend his acquaintance to a common civilian is a very great honour for the latter.

He continued to keep his diamond in his bedroom although, as he somewhat recklessly told the stranger, he had been warned that some scoundrels were trying to steal it. They were welcome to their trouble, he added, and it was all they would get, except probably a smart sentence when they were captured.

Of course these remarks were all bluff. As a matter of fact, the Colonel watched his man with unceasing vigilance. If Henderson came out for a stroll in the garden, the old soldier was sure to be standing at his house-door a few seconds later, apparently absorbed in the deepest thought.

When the enemy went for his evening constitutional, which generally happened about nine o'clock, the Colonel

would follow him at a distance of about thirty yards, skipping lightly from the shelter of a gate to a tree, and thence with a sudden swoop, down-headed, to the next piece of cover. Anybody who might be sufficiently interested to follow him—and he was followed nearly every night—must have been highly edified. But the old soldier's eyes were both in the front of his head and fully occupied.

We have said that the Colonel was followed every night, at the same time that he was following Henderson, and the remark needs a little explanation. A few days after the letter arrived from Scotland Yard, the Colonel, whose gardener and general factotum had recently left him, was visited by a smart, soldierly-looking man, who produced a testimonial from a high, military personage, which satisfied the Colonel in an instant. The man applied for the vacant situation, and was accepted.

He gave complete satisfaction. He had served in the ranks, he was smart in his appearance, he knew his business. But there were two curious circumstances about the man. The first was that he tracked the Colonel on all his nightly rambles. Perhaps he had a feeling in his mind that his master might quarrel with Mr. Henderson and he wished to be ready to render whatever assistance might be necessary.

The second circumstance was the antipathy to him manifested on at least one occasion by Mr. Henderson. Jones was mowing the lawn, when the former opened the French windows of his drawing-room and stepped quietly out for a stroll. The next moment he saw Jones and stepped back as though in intense surprise. His eyes dilated in fear and amazement, and then in an instant he turned and walked hurriedly back into his house.

In order to watch the enemy the Colonel had arranged to take his meals in the drawing-room, close to a window which commanded a view of the front garden-gate. By this means he practically surrounded the house, for the only outlet from the back garden was by a path leading to the front.

Frequently the gallant officer would jump up suddenly in the midst of a meal, to the great astonishment of his wife, as admirable in her way as her husband, and possessed of a simple, unquestioning faith in the latter.

"Br-r-mph!" the old soldier would gasp, and well for him if his food didn't go "wrong way" in the excitement of the moment. "Br-r-mph! There he goes! I'm off! Don't wait."

Then he would rush from the room, cannoning furiously against everything, upsetting chairs, breaking ornaments, his legs or arms going like a windmill. He would stumble blindly over the doormat, fling open the front door and—the next moment he would be standing on the doorstep gazing placidly at the sky, absolutely wrapped and buttoned up in the deepest thought.

Of course these wild sallies were not without a certain element of risk. On one occasion, the front door happened to be open, and the postman was standing on the top step awaiting a receipt for a registered letter. The Colonel caught his foot against the mat—his invariable custom—stumbled forward, with his head half a yard in advance of his body, and butted the poor postman neatly just in the centre.

At the same moment the door of the adjoining house was opened and Henderson appeared. The two men who had just met each other were rolling head over heels down the steps together.

"Good gracious, Colonel!" cried Henderson, "whatever has happened? Have you—have you had a fall?"

But the old soldier had "Br-r-mphed!" and "Confounded!" so energetically all the time his head and legs were bumping down the stone steps, that he was by this time breathless and gasping; otherwise he would certainly have said something crushing to Henderson in return for his foolish question. For any man—even a civilian—should have known better than to ask a man if he has had a fall, just after he has seen him roll down five stone steps and halfway down a gravel path.

"I didn't expect to see you so suddenly, Colonel," continued the offender, "although I did wish to meet you. Nothing special—merely to tell you I am going away to-night for a couple of days."

The Colonel could scarcely repress a start of astonishment.

"Yes, yes—very good of you!" he stammered, "er—postman, very sorry—little amends—don't mention—I beg—Br-r-mph. Strange coincidence, Mr. Henderson—going away myself—two days—must pack up. Good evening, sir."

The gardener was trimming the edge close to where the two men were standing. He turned his head slowly as his master passed along the path.

"Old fool!" he muttered, and glanced reflectively towards the window of the Colonel's bedroom.

Mr. Henderson heard the words, and saw the look that accompanied them. He glanced across the hedge with a curious mixture of fear and threatening—stepped forward as if to speak, and then turned on his heel and strode away.

"Another fool!" muttered the gardener laconically.

About an hour later, Mr. Henderson left his house carrying a hand-bag. He walked briskly towards the station, and presently disappeared in the gathering twilight. Before the sound of his footsteps ceased to echo along the newly-paved road, the Colonel was after him, and the gardener stepping from some dark corner, followed stealthily after his master.

The first man reached the station and entered. The Colonel, turning suddenly, discovered he was being followed. He ran straight towards Jones, who was too much taken by surprise to retreat.

"You, sir—you, sir," spluttered the fiery old soldier. "What do you mean—following people—what—Jones!"

"Yes, sir, it's me!" said the gardener quietly. "Just taking a stroll, no offence I hope, sir."

"Quite right—quite right, Jones, didn't know it was you."

As a matter of fact, the Colonel was struggling with a new idea. Gardener, indeed! The man was a detective. The Colonel remembered the letter from Scotland Yard, and their desire to catch the thief in the act.

"Look here," he said gruffly. "Do you know where Scotland Yard is? Don't let your jaw drop like that—it's a waste of time—I know all about you."

"Yes, sir, the testimonial was very—very full."

"Very rubbish!" growled the Colonel. "Do you deny that the Scotland Yard people have sent you here to keep an eye on my Nag-a-por, and to catch the would-be thief, if possible?

"Anyhow, you may as well stay, now you're here," he added. "When you return, tell Mrs. Lambert I shall not be home for a couple of days, I forgot to mention it—and don't let anything go wrong while I'm away."

"Yes, sir. Sorry I deceived you, sir, but I had my instructions."

"The man who obeys orders, never goes wrong." And the Colonel strode away towards the station. The train had just left, and the booking clerk was standing at the door of his little office.

"Mr. Henderson gone by this train?" said the Colonel. "Tall, fair-haired man, Flixton Road."

"Oh! yes, sir, know him quite well," was the reply. "He's on the train that's just gone out."

"Br-r-mph! I'm too late then."

"But he only booked to Davyhulme, sir."

The Colonel did not forget to thank the man, for with all his gruffness, the old soldier was exquisitely courteous to high and low.

Davyhulme was a little village about three miles away. It only contained about two hundred inhabitants, and those were nearly all the poorest class. Yet Mr. Henderson had stated deliberately that he should be away two days!

Events appeared to be ripening all round. When the Colonel left the station, his eyes were deeply intrenched beneath overhanging brows, his head erect, his shoulders squared. The old soldier was about to take the field.

When he reached the high road, he glanced keenly down the long array of lighted lamps. A man was walking slowly away from the station. His footsteps were audible, and when he presently passed beneath a lamp, his figure was plainly distinguishable. He disappeared again in an instant, swallowed up by gloomy shadows.

The Colonel took a cigar from his case. "That man was Jones," he ruminated, "going back to the house. Henderson is at Davyhulme, and will be shortly on his way to the same place as Jones." He struck a match, lighted his cigar, and then glanced at his watch. "Early enough yet," he muttered. "I'll finish the cigar, and then it will be time enough to take up my position."

He closed his watch-case with a snap, threw the match away, and strode briskly down the road, away from his own house.

* * * * * *

At one o'clock the next morning the Colonel's house looked peaceful and innocent enough for anything. The night had lightened considerably since the early evening, owing to the belated appearance of the moon. The house, jerry-built villa though it was, looked like a palace rising from a groundwork of enchanted light and shadow. Even the neglected summer-house, touched by the moonbeams, nestled like a queen Titania's palace at the end of the garden. One might enter in full hope of finding there a gallant troop of fairies, disporting themselves bravely amid the dust and the gloom.

But assuredly anyone who might enter the summer-house with such a hope, would be doomed to disappointment. For instead of Oberon and Titania and their little attendants, there was only one grim looking man, who sat amid the shadows with a loaded revolver on the ledge before him, and watched the silent windows of his own house.

Shortly after one o'clock the Colonel became aware that he was not the only man on guard. Someone suddenly appeared in the next garden, vaulted lightly over the intercepting hedge, and crouched in an instant behind some bushes, about half-way along the garden. This man was Henderson, and to say the Colonel was surprised, is to state the case very mildly indeed.

But the latter had no time for surprise, for events began to hurry to a conclusion. Possibly it was well, for Henderson might otherwise have been tempted to rush for the shelter of the summer-house.

The light of a match suddenly flared up at one of the windows. The Colonel recognised his own bedroom, where the Nag-a-por was kept. Presently the gas was lighted but turned down to a mere glimmer at once. Then silence and stagnation for nearly half-an-hour. At the end of that time the light in the bedroom disappeared. The man who had presumably the diamond in his possession, stood at the window for a moment ere he passed from the room. It was Jones!

The Colonel became more and more bewildered. Who was this mysterious man? Gardener, detective, or thief? And in what relation did he stand towards Henderson?

The old soldier shrugged his shoulders and took up his revolver from the ledge; next moment the house door was opened, and Jones appeared at the threshold. He came lightly down the stone steps, and running along the garden path blundered straight into the arms of Henderson who sprang suddenly from behind the bushes.

Jones immediately put a hand to his breast pocket in a way that told its own tale.

The two men stood in the centre of a broad patch of moonlight. The Colonel fingered his revolver irresolutely, puzzled by this last development. Anyhow, he had both the men at his mercy, and could afford to wait for a few minutes longer.

"Give me that diamond," said Henderson fiercely.

"Haven't got a diamond."

"When thieves fall out," murmured the Colonel softly.

"You're telling lies," growled Henderson, and dealt the other man a buffet that flung him on his back in an instant.

Then he sprang after his fallen antagonist, stooped and pulled his closely-buttoned coat asunder. Next moment he stood erect holding in his hand something that glittered in the moonlight. The Colonel quietly opened the door of the summer-house.

"You give that back," said Jones sulkily, as he rose to his feet. "It isn't yours. I'll go halves if you like."

The Colonel took a step forward.

"I shall return this to its owner," said Henderson sternly; and the Colonel stepped back to the summer-house. "As for you, I ought to march you to the nearest police-station."

"You daren't do that."

"No, perhaps not," replied Henderson sadly. "I've too much regard for our good name. And the shock would probably kill my father. But I'll tell you what I'll do, Tom. If you'll go to Australia and promise to play the straight game there, I'll pay your passage out and bank something for you to start with. And I'll return this in the morning to the Colonel, and beg him not to make any trouble about it. He's a bit pompous and stilted, but I think he's a gentleman. Come into my house till the morning and we'll talk matters over."

The two men walked to the gate and turning into the next garden entered the house. The Colonel, who was certainly not a sentimentalist, discerned an expression on his gardener's face that pleased him hugely.

"Scotland Yard will never have another chance of catching that man," he muttered. "Br-r-mph! I'll invite Henderson to dinner to-morrow—he's a gentleman—and he can bring his briar pipe with him."

But as for the diamond, the Colonel appeared to have forgotten its very existence.

Frank Wall.

A WORD IN YOUR EAR!

Has it ever struck you, while walking along a West-end street, that the fashionably-dressed, dainty occupants of the handsomely appointed carriages and pairs which swiftly pass you, may possibly be as deeply steeped in crime as the ragged, coarse foot-pad who snatches at your watch or your hand-bag? Perhaps it hasn't; but it is, nevertheless, true. And if you read our new series of stories entitled "The Confessions of Cynthia" (which commence next week), your eyes will probably be opened to many strange things which take place under the cloak of quality. Cynthia was a lady's companion, and she has some truly remarkable stories to tell

Eighteen and Eighty.

Old Lady: "There is one thing I notice particularly about that young man who calls to see you. He seems to have an inborn, instinctive respect for woman, as though she were a being from a higher sphere, to be approached with the utmost delicacy and deference." Granddaughter (sweet eighteen): "Yes, he's horribly bashful."

He Got One.

Mabel (relenting a little, but still a little angry): "Anything I have of yours I will return at once." Charlie (giving her a kiss): "Well, there's your opportunity."

Very Unkind.

Maud: "Now, when I am asked to sing, I never say, 'Oh, I can't,' but I always sit down at the piano and——" Mamie: "And let the audience find it out for themselves. Yes."

Very Chaste.

"I am so pleased," said young Mrs. Warble to her husband, "that you succeeded at last in matching that pattern! Don't you think the design is wonderfully chaste?" "I should say so," replied Warble; "I ran all over the town after it."

It Wasn't Etiquette.

Mrs Hendricks (the landlady): "Can I send you some more soup, Mr. Dumley?" Mr. Dumley: "No, thanks." Mrs. Hendricks (engagingly): "Don't refuse, Mr. Dumley, because it isn't considered good form to be helped twice to soup." Mr. Dumley: "Oh, etiquette has nothing to do with it, madam; it's the soup."

Why He Wept.

Kindly Neighbour: "How is the baby this morning, Johnnie?" "He's worse, ma'am. The doctor says he can't live the week out. Boo-hoo-hoo!" "My dear boy, I sincerely hope the baby will get well." "So do I. It 'ud be awful hard on me for him to die this week, 'cause Saturday's th' day of th' circus."

Fully Explained.

A mother, indignant to find her little daughter very low in her class at school, exclaimed wrathfully: "I am out of all patience with you, Mollie. I should just like to know why Sally Jones is always at the head of her class, while you are always at the foot?" Mollie hesitated for a moment, and then, looking her mother squarely in the face, she said, demurely: "You seem to forget, mamma, that Sally has very clever parents."

A Genuine Antique.

Mrs. Suburb: "Is this the house you've been talking about? I don't like it at all." Agent: "It's the latest Queen Anne style, mum." Mrs. Suburb: "I don't like it. The kitchen opens right into the parlour, or nearly so." Agent: "Yes, mum, Queen Anne was a famous cook, mum. She named that fine old apple pudding 'Brown Betty,' after Queen Elizabeth, mum. Queen Elizabeth was noted for doing things up brown, you know, mum." Mrs. Suburb: "And, dear me, the cellar is half full of water." Agent: "Yes, mum. In those old days people always kept water on hand, to use in time of a siege, you know, mum."

The Worm Will Turn.

"You were always a fault-finder," growled the wife. "Yes, dear," responded the husband meekly; "I found you."

Her Preference.

"Come," observed the brisk young stock-broker to his very best girl. "You shall choose your own present." And then she observed artlessly: "Are—.. —engagement rings very expensive?"

Adam and Eve.

Willie (who has eaten his apple): "Mabel, let's play Adam and Eve. You be Eve and I'll be Adam." Mabel: "All right. Well?" Willie: "Now you tempt me to eat your apple, and I'll give way to temptation."

Tired of Waiting.

They had been engaged a long time, and one evening were reading the paper together. "Look, love, only £2 10s. for a suit of clothes!" "Is it a wedding suit?" she asked, looking naïvely at her lover. "Oh, no," he replied, "it's a business suit." "Well, I meant business," she replied.

A Life Sentence.

Father (to his little son, who has been robbing an orchard): "Never mind, my son. You're sure to be imprisoned." Little Son: "But you've stolen, pa. I heard ma say that years ago you stole her heart; and you weren't imprisoned, were you?" Father (sadly): "Oh, yes, I was, my son. I was sentenced to penal servitude for life."

Had to be Careful.

Fond Mother (to daughter): "Jennie, did you kiss young Gaskins again to-night?" Daughter: "Yes, mamma; he's just lost an uncle, and I was sorry for him." "Well, Jennie, let this be the last. I'm afraid if you keep on encouraging him with your sympathy, he won't have a relative left in the wide, wide world."

More Eloquent Than Words.

A certain volunteer, who was a great man in his own eyes, was, by some influence, appointed captain. He could hardly speak of anything but his new dignity. Meeting a friend one day, he accosted him thus: "Well, Jim, I suppose you know I have been appointed captain?" "Yes," said Jim, "I heard so." "Well, what do your folks say about it?" asked the captain. "They don't say nothin'," replied truthful James; "they just laugh."

A Model Husband.

Wife: "I saw the loveliest lace curtains to-day, only half-a-crown, and I wanted them awfully, but I knew you wished to economise, and so I didn't get them." Husband: "That's too bad, my dear, you should have got them. Anything which adds to your happiness and brings gladness to your eyes, anything which lightens your domestic cares and gilds the towering clouds, anything which borders with sweet flowers, the thorny paths of duty, and appeals pleasantly to your æsthetic nature, making life more worth living, home a paradise, you are welcome, doubly welcome to, my angel—if it doesn't cost more than half-a-crown."

Thoughtful Consideration.

"Oh, mamma," she said, with a little burst of girlish confidence, "what do you think? Mr. Iddyot proposed last night." "Ah, did he, my dear. And what did my little girl say?" "Oh, I told him that an engagement was too solemn and sacred a thing to me to be entered into without serious and thoughtful consideration, and that I would give him my answer in a week. And now, mamma mine, we must go to work and find out if he really and truly has a thousand a year." "You dear, wise little girl!" cried the fond mother, folding her child to her bosom and weeping softly over her.

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Your Editor Chats.

This, as you will observe, is a new feature, but I have inaugurated it because I want to get on speaking terms with my readers, to tell them of anything particular which I am contemplating publishing in *Short Stories*, and to solicit their opinion upon the paper which I bring out week by week.

You will notice that just below I am announcing a new competition. I want you all to go in for this, as, by its means, I hope to get some sort of idea of the kind of short story you best like. So that you will be helping me by entering the competition, and at the same time may secure to yourself the prize of £1, or, if not that, one of the twenty-five consolation prizes offered.

I suppose I have hardly a reader who is not intensely interested in the new serial. Well, it has been secured with no little difficulty, and right up to the concluding chapter, Mr. Farmer maintains his reputation as a thrilling and clever story writer.

But I have another feature in hand which is every bit as interesting, and on account of the legal trouble we have had before we were allowed to publish, is perhaps more exciting. You know, of course, to what I refer—"The Confessions of Cynthia." These are a series of revelations made by a Lady's Companion, and will give you a better insight into the secret crimes which are often practised in high life than any fictitious novel could do. I use the first of these next week, and my cover for that number, will depict a card-room scene, which plays a most important part in the first adventure. But I mustn't tell you any more about it now. Be sure, however, that you do not miss it, and you will be doing the paper a service by telling those of your friends about it whom you know will be interested, besides giving them something which it will be well worth their while to read.

I shall have more to tell you next week.

£1 for an Opinion.

That is what we are willing to offer for the best opinion as to what are **the three nicest tales in this number** of *Short Stories*.

All you have to do is to send in on a post-card the names of the stories you consider the best in the order of their merit, with your own name and address. The reader who names the three stories which are most popular with the majority will receive the first prize, while the twenty-five whose lists come next in order of popularity will receive **handsome silver-plated pencil-cases as Consolation prizes.**

Try! It will cost you nothing and you may be successful.

Opinions should be addressed to the Competition Editor, *Short Stories*, Henrietta Street, Covent Garden.

The competition closes on June 10th.

Coronation Month Weddings.

Nine Thousand Rings Sold.

The month in which King Edward will be crowned bids fair to establish a record for weddings. One firm alone has this year sold 9,000 engagement rings; the engaged couples intending—unless disease or accident prevents—to tie the knot in June. Weakly women, married or single, have in Bile Beans a certain remedy for the ailments and disorders which afflict their sex at this season. This is shown by the experience of Miss Bertha Mosedale, of Georgina Street, Bury, Lancashire, who to a *Bury Boro Advertiser* reporter said: "For a long time I suffered from inflammation of the lungs, which left me extremely weak. I was fagged with the least effort. For a time I struggled on, but was forced finally to give up work altogether. I had become so reduced that I was in bed six weeks. So completely had my appetite left me that during the whole of that time I don't think I ate a shillingsworth of food in a week. I was at last led to try Charles Forde's Bile Beans for Biliousness by reading a book in which was recorded a number of cures by Bile Beans. Some of these cases had been worse than my own. I had not been taking the Beans long before I was able to return to my duties, and now I am better than ever I have been in my life. Bile Beans are unequalled for anæmic debility, indigestion, sleeplessness, headache, liver and kidney disorders, constipation, nervousness, female ailments, pimples, bad breath, buzzing in the head, and for skin eruptions and all blood impurities. All chemists stock them, or you may obtain them from the Bile Bean Manufacturing Co., 119 and 120 London Wall, London, E.C., by sending prices, one and three-halfpence or two and nine. They give health which is better than virgin gold.

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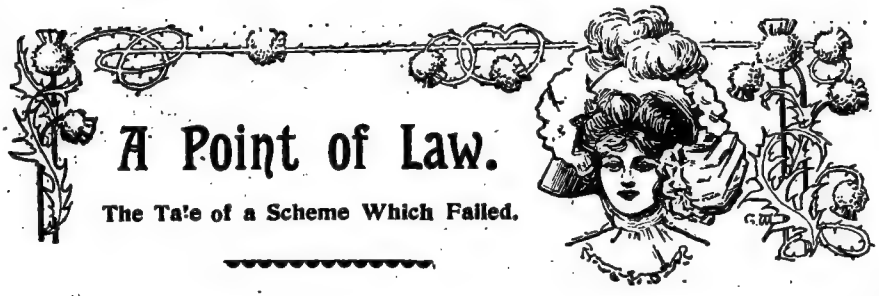

A Point of Law.

The Tale of a Scheme Which Failed.

Mr. Aubrey Snashall required a piece of legal information. It was one that any solicitor might have supplied, but for the elucidation of so simple a point, a lawyer's fee seemed scarcely worth incurring, and Mr. Snashall was not by nature inclined to generosity. In vain he studied the "Answers to Correspondents" columns in some likely papers. One apparently demented reader sounded an editor as to the legality of marrying one's mother-in-law, but no earnest seeker after truth, gratis, requested a reply to the knotty question—can a guardian marry his ward before she becomes of age?

In the answer, whether affirmative or negative, Mr. Snashall was vitally and personally interested. Ada Winter, his ward, was not only a highly prepossessing young lady; but in about seven months time she would attain her majority and step into quite a considerable fortune. What a happy and useful arrangement if he could marry the girl, give her the benefit of his life-long protection, and himself cease for ever from the rather vulgar necessity of making money by selling hides! A disparity of eighteen years in their respective ages hardly dimmed the romantic prospect. Ada was a sensible young girl, and would prefer the seasoned article.

Turning over the unsolved question in his mind one night, Aubrey Snashall suddenly bethought himself of his nephew, Oscar Paterson, who had been recently called to the Bar, and was now waiting expectantly for briefs. How stupid not to have remembered him before, particularly as he was an occasional visitor at the house! The claim of relationship of course precluded the possibility of any fee being suggested, (Mr. Snashall reflected with glee that there were now both a barrister and a doctor in the family), and, if managed with discretion, the real purpose of the inquiry would never be discovered.

Mr. Snashall drew a sheet of notepaper from his case.

"I'll write and ask Oscar to dine with me at the Club to-morrow night," he said to himself; then over a fresh cigar quietly matured his tactics.

* * * * *

Aubrey Snashall and his nephew sat chatting together in the smoking room of the club. The dinner from which they had lately risen had worked out at a rather higher figure for Mr. Snashall than usual, but Oscar must be put in his pleasantest mood. To the furtherance of that end his uncle had sympathised with him for about the sixth time on the tardy appearance of briefs.

"Yes, uncle, 'tis a nuisance, but I suppose every young barrister has to cultivate patience."

"I must see if I can bring any influence to bear, Oscar. I shall put in a word for you in one or two quarters."

"Thanks! I hate to be idle. If I remain briefless, the only solution seems to marry a rich wife, and——"

Mr. Snashall gave a start, but quickly recovered himself, and turned a frowning brow upon the young man, who sat with the light of mischief in his eyes.

"A step like that, Oscar, would not at all square with—ahem, our family ideals."

"I should require to be in love first, of course. Sometimes, though, love and money go together, don't they?" He directed a slightly anxious glance towards the elder man.

"Sometimes, I admit," returned the other uncomfortably. "More often in books perhaps than in real life. By the way, I am reading such an interesting novel."

"Not a problem novel?"

"In a sense—yes."

"What's the title, uncle?" Oscar prepared to make a note on his shirt cuff.

"Dear me. How stupid. I quite forget. It's a man's name—something like—no, I can't remember. I wish authors wouldn't christen their books with the outlandish names of their characters."

"And what's the plot?" persisted his nephew.

"I've only read a few chapters as yet. It's about a Colonel, a silly old man nearing sixty, who wants to marry an ugly ward of his for her money. A most disgraceful wish, I call it. She isn't twenty one, and he thinks that he can't legally marry her, being under age."

"The old rascal should consult a lawyer."

"Ye—es, Oscar! The lawyer would of course——"

"Laugh at his fears. The marriage would be legal enough. How does the story go on?"

"I've got no further at present. You know I have so little time for reading. Excuse me! I see my friend Binning over there. I must go and have a word with him."

Walking to his chambers a little later, Oscar recalled the memories of the evening. It had been most agreeably spent and the dinner was first-class; moreover, Uncle Aubrey had proved more than usually gracious. He could not help wondering if at their next meeting those pleasant relations would be maintained.

Strange how several times his uncle had not appeared at his usual ease! He seemed to have something on his mind, and talked with less self-assurance than was customary for him. Queer his mentioning a novel! He had always conveyed to Oscar the impression of being a man who read no fiction except what one finds (in abundant measure sometimes) in the daily papers.

Suddenly a thought struck Oscar which made him stand stock still in the centre of the pavement and emit a prolonged whistle. Had that reference to the guardian and his ward a secret significance? At the time his suspicions had not been aroused, but he now felt that the subject was dragged into the conversation by the heels. Was it possible that Uncle Aubrey wanted to marry Ada Winter, and had employed a little ruse whereby to test the legality of his position?

Oscar seemed vastly amused at the idea.

"If that's Uncle's game," he said to himself, as he turned the latch key in his lock, "I guess he will have an unpleasant awakening in the morning."

* * * * *

Mr. Aubrey Snashall had slept the sleep of the just. Thanks to his nephew—his dear unsuspicious boy—his one doubt had been dissipated, and he had but to step in and claim his prize. Never had he felt so contented with life as on this particular morning.

Ada Winter and his lady housekeeper, Mrs. Dobson, were already seating themselves at the breakfast-table as he entered the dining-room. He greeted both cheerily, failing to notice that on his appearance Ada slipped a letter which she had been reading into her pocket and slightly coloured.

"What a jolly morning! I feel ten years younger on a day like this," said Mr. Snashall, dropping into his accustomed chair.

The remark was designed to fit in with the spruce and juvenile appearance which he had purposely studied this morning. By a liberal application of oil he had toned down the growing greyness of his hair which, from not being brushed backwards, showed less than at the temples. His neck-tie, edging a high collar, was bright and sportive. The

(*Concluded on page 735.*)

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Dr. X. La Motte Sage made a fortune out of Hypnotism. He probably knows more about the subject than any living man. His methods are radically different from any ever before presented. By his new system he hypnotizes people instantaneously. He tells you how to exert tremendous silent influence without making a gesture or saying a single word. He gives the only real, practical methods for the development of the power of Personal Magnetism that have ever been published. During all the time that Dr. Sage was before the public he made it his business to note carefully the effect of hypnotism upon the human mind. He became convinced that this mighty mysterious power could be utilized to the advantage of ambitious men and women who wished to better their condition in life. To demonstrate the correctness of his ideas, when he retired from public life he founded a college where Hypnotism, Personal Magnetism, Magnetic Healing, &c., might be taught along the definite lines he had laid down. The result is that the college has grown to be the largest of its kind in the world. Thousands of successful students in all parts of the globe are living witnesses to the wonderful power and the great practical benefits to be derived from Dr. Sage's methods. The Doctor has recently written a book entitled "The Philosophy of Personal Influence," in which he tells in plain, simple language just how to acquire hypnotic power and the various uses to which it may be put. Among the many interesting things upon which the book treats are: How to develop magnetic power and influence people without their knowledge; how to cure bad habits and obstinate chronic diseases, when medicine and everything else in this line fails; how to implant a command in a subject's mind that he will carry out in every detail a month or a year hence, whether the hypnotist is present or not; how to hypnotize people at a distance; its value in business; marvellous scientific tests how to prevent people from influencing you; hypnotic power more fascinating than beauty; the use of hypnotism in the development of the mental faculties; controlling children; removing domestic troubles, &c.

The college which Dr. Sage has founded proposes to give away $10,000 worth of the above books absolutely free so long as the special edition lasts. Any person who is in earnest can get a copy merely by writing for it. This book is handsomely illustrated by the finest half tone engravings. It tells you how the marvellous power of hypnotism has been used to cast a secret mystic spell over people without their knowledge, and how they have been for months, and in some cases even years obeying the royal will of another. It gives you the secret of the development of what Senator Chauncey M. Depew calls the money making microbe. Don't think because you lack a fine education and are working for a small salary that you cannot better your condition; do not think that because you are now successful in life that you cannot be more successful. Dr. Sage's book has been read, and his methods are to-day being used by many of the richest men in the world. They know the value of personal influence, of hypnotic power. If you are interested address penny post-card to-day to the New York Institute of Science, Dept. VA17, Rochester, New York, U.S.A. and a copy of Dr. Sage's book will be sent you by return mail absolutely free. This is a rare opportunity to learn the uses and possibilities of the most wonderful, marvellous and mysterious power known to man. The book is enthusiastically indorsed by the most prominent business men, ministers of the gospel, lawyers, and doctors. It should be in every home; it should be read by every man and woman in this country who wants to better his condition in life, who wants to achieve greater financial success, win friends, gratify his ambitions and get out of life the pleasure and happiness which the Creator intended he should enjoy.

familiar frock-coat was temporarily discarded in favour of a light lounge jacket.

"You're not taking a holiday to-day, are you, uncle?" Ada asked, with a glance at his attire. "Uncle?" was her usual mode of address, but somehow it jarred upon Mr. Snashall's ears to-day.

"No! Only a whim of mine! I want to pretend that summer is really here at last."

It was customary after breakfast for both Ada and Mrs. Robson to retire and leave Mr. Snashall to the uninterrupted perusal of his newspaper, a duty which he faithfully discharged even to the advertisements. This morning, however, the girl quietly closed the door after the housekeeper and came back to the table, toying for excuse with some of the tea-cups.

"Any news in the paper, uncle?"

"None at all, dear!" He threw the sheets aside. "Come and sit down. There's something particular I want to say to you."

"So do I. Something very particular!"

"How curious! Which shall begin?"

"Oh, I must. The lady's prerogative you know."

"All right, Ada. Fire ahead!"

He crossed his knees complacently, and, smiling into her face, folded his hand over hers. It was sweet to feel her so near and to know that in a few minutes she would be yet nearer.

He waited without suspicion for her to begin. Doubtless something trifling had gone wrong in the domestic sphere. Perhaps the cook was anxious to better herself, or Mrs. Dobson—amusing thought—hoped shortly to discard her widow's weeds.

"Uncle, I want your consent to marry."

Mr. Snashall sat suddenly upright in his chair, and swerved round with lightning-like velocity. Had he possibly heard aright?

"Marry!" he shrieked.

"Yes. I'm getting quite old now."

A bomb exploding beneath Mr. Snashall's feet could not have more thoroughly disconcerted him. For the moment he was quite speechless with surprise and indignation. That splendid scheme of his at one blow lay shattered into fragments.

"I'm so sorry if I've hurt you, uncle. But you know it would come some day, and——"

"Ada, it is impossible. You must not marry yet. I'm sure you wouldn't wish to repay me thus for what I have been to you all these years."

The girl's lips stiffened with resolution.

"It needs must be, Uncle Aubrey. I've pledged my word and out of real honest love too."

"But my consent," he faintly objected.

"You'll give me that like an old dear, I know."

She placed her hand on his shoulder and continued playfully, but with determination. "And if you should withhold it, in about seven months' time I shall be positively my own mistress, and after all a trousseau cannot be got ready in a day."

Slowly Mr. Snashall was coming to realise the hopelessness of the situation. This determined girl would clearly brook no interference, nor could any inducement turn her from her purpose; she was complete mistress of the situation. He had wanted her for her money before; now, strangely enough, he wanted her for herself. Standing triumphantly beside him, she yet fascinated him more than ever. What a charming addition she would make to any man's home! In the first shock of the revelation he had forgotten to inquire the name.

"Who is it, Ada?" he simply asked.

"Someone you know and someone you like. Quite young—only twenty-three—and with the most brilliant prospects. Can't you guess?"

"No, I can't."

"There you dear, silly, blind thing, I won't keep you in suspense. Why, it's your own nephew, Oscar Paterson!"

In the afternoon of that self-same day, young Paterson, blessing for the moment his brieflessness, went to a quiet corner of Battersea Park where Ada Winter was to meet him by appointment. They had enjoyed various previous meetings in that sylvan spot, but to-day's would probably prove the most momentous of all. That morning the storm must have broken. How had Ada fared under it, and what was the result?

Oscar arrived first at their accustomed seat, screened from observation by a convenient cluster of foliage. Feeling restless he began to pace up and down. His uncle's face, pallid with fury, loomed up before his imagination. A thwarted suitor was really not at all a pleasant person for anybody to encounter.

A few minutes later Ada came hurrying along the path.

"Oh, Oscar, I've had such an awful time," she commenced.

"Is it all right?" he asked anxiously.

"Yes, but——"

"Thank goodness! Come and sit down. Now tell me all about it."

She recounted the scene between herself and Mr. Snashall.

"When he heard who it was, I thought he would explode. I never saw anyone so upset in my life. I don't understand it in the least. He never seemed to care for me half so much as that. And why, Oscar, did you send that mysterious little letter I got at breakfast, telling me to speak to him before he got the chance of speaking to me?"

"I suspected something of which I am certain now. Haven't you guessed it, Ada?"

"No, it's all a puzzle to me."

"Then prepare for a shock? He wanted to marry you himself."

She received it with incredulity which gradually disappeared as Oscar related in detail the events of the previous evening and she thought everything out. When all was told, they both leant back and laughed consumedly.

"Uncle Aubrey will be shy of meeting me again won't he, Ada? I did give him, though, a perfectly disinterested piece of advice."

"Perfectly! But I think he'll gladly pay six and eightpence to solve his next delicate point of law."

From the Lips of Experience.

Old Henpeck: "Nonsense! The idea of talking so about marriage! You and my daughter have not been engaged over six months." Young Man: "Do you believe in long engagements?" Old Henpeck: "Certainly, my young friend, certainly. The longer the engagement the shorter the marriage."

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By Madge Morris.

[*I shall be glad to answer, to the best of my ability, any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to me personally, c/o the Editor of* Short Stories.]

A Querulous Friend.

"Kitty" is a candid girl. She admits that her temperament is really hateful. While one day she is on the best of terms with Dolly, her particular friend, the next she becomes simply horrid. Now Dolly has begun to get a little tired of this, and has told "Kitty" sorrowfully that she fears their friendship cannot continue, unless "Kitty" tries to be nicer to her.

I think "Kitty" had better, in her own interest, take Dolly's suggestion seriously, at any rate for the time being. I know quite what kind of girl she is, and think the best cure would be for her to learn to value a friend by experiencing what alienation really means. Let "Kitty" and Dolly not meet each other for a month, and if, at the end of that time, they find they miss each other, they will come together as a matter of course, and perhaps "Kitty" will have then learnt to be more careful of the little restraints necessary in preserving one's attachments.

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Should We Return to our Old Lovers?

For a year "Leo" has been parted from Maisie, his old sweetheart. They had grown cool towards each other, owing to misunderstandings which resulted from mischief-making "friends," and have never since had the sense to make it up, preferring to keep at a safe distance from each other, and to avoid meeting whenever possible. Recently they were forced to speak to each other, and "Leo" felt a return of the old spark directly he heard her voice. At the same time he does not think anything could restore their old relationship. He asks me whether I should advise him to endeavour to resume it.

Evidently Maisie is the girl whom "Leo" at heart really loves. The year's absence may have been the very thing necessary to consolidate their affections. If after that time he has found that the old spark is still alive, and that he is really as fond of her as ever, I think he should again resume the affair. When he says he could not resume the old relations with her, does he mean that they could never—well—kiss each other again? Nonsense, "Leo." Try a few more meetings, and all the silly coolness will rapidly disappear, if I know anything about the eccentricities of love.

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The Neglected Beauty.

"Viola" modestly writes to me to tell me she is very beautiful. I do not doubt this for one moment. Quite probably she is more familiar with her image than others, from more constant observation. However, she finds that, in spite of her looks—which are, she knows, universally admired—other comparatively unattractive girls appear to be infinitely more popular with the men, who never "run after" her. She asks if I know of similar cases, and if they are likely to coincide with her own.

I know of very many such cases. "Viola" should understand that actual beauty is seldom in itself a woman's most attractive feature. To draw men she must possess some quality—one might call it "winsomeness"—which is practically half the battle in a woman. Many very pretty girls—perhaps including "Viola"—are so conscious of their looks that they are apt to be contemptuous of the rest of human kind. They are accordingly very proud, selfish, and capricious, and though later on one man may find these attributes the embellishments of a goddess, to the general run of men they are grave defects, and do much to neutralise in them any admiration they may have for their looks. As a matter of fact, many men of my acquaintance tell me they are afraid, in advance, of the accepted beauty, as they suspect that such characteristics are almost certain to accompany extreme good looks. For this reason, therefore, they make their advances, in the first instance, to the plainer girls, who possess more winsomeness and warmth. The result is that cold beauty often finds itself last in the struggle—until, of course, the rightful claimant comes along to rescue it.

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More Stage Fever.

Do you really want to go on the stage very much, "Gilbert"? Are you quite sure that you can act, and that so well that you would make instant headway on the boards? Then what is more simple than to start your career by joining an amateur dramatic society, such as must exist in your neighbourhood, and trying your capacities there? If, as you say, the spirit of Irving burns within you, it cannot fail to strike those who will witness your first performance. At any rate, let nothing induce you to think of throwing up any appointment you have to endeavour to get engaged in a London company. That way lies ruin and poverty. What I am telling you is, I know, very stock advice, but there are far too many girl and men suffering from stage fever, that I should let an opportunity pass of putting the matter in its real light to those who appear as yet to be ignorant of it.

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Freckles.

Don't fret so much about your freckles, "Annie H."! You say you have light golden hair, and rather small features, with nice grey eyes. Well, what is the matter with a few freckles? You make quite a mistake if you suppose they are a disfigurement. They probably serve to show up the beauty of that hair, and those eyes, in a way that, perhaps, an unfreckled complexion would fail to do. Further, if it is the young men you are thinking of, don't be afraid on that score. Most of them like freckles, as they show a girl to be at any rate in pretty good health, and accustomed to the open air. Besides, there are too many pasty-faced people about already for one to wish to see their number added to.

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How to be Christened.

At a christening, "H. J. Y.," the nurse should carry the baby from the house to the church in her arms, and keep it there until the commencement of the service. She should then hand the child over to the godmother. The father should, as soon as the christening party enters the church, go to the vestry and give in the infant's name to the clergyman plainly written on a piece of paper, also any details necessary affecting the child's birth. The nurse should again take the baby after the ceremony. The fee, which varies with the means of the sponsor from five shillings upwards, is paid by the godfather, and half a crown should go to the verger. The former fee should be placed on the register, or table, not handed to the clergyman.

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Tact Wanted.

"Cantab" is very intimate with a young lady, but thinks she is too old for him, as well as being of delicate health. Recently her father introduced him to some friends as the lady's sweetheart, which surprised him very much, as he has no thought of marrying her. How should he act without hurting her feelings. I should tell her that you took it as a great compliment being introduced as her sweetheart, but that the idea of your standing in such a relation of honour as that to herself had never entered your head, that you like and admire her as a friend, which feeling you hope she reciprocates.

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The Coronation.

Preliminary Warning and Advice.

Whereas, it being a matter of common knowledge that numbers of the King's loyal subjects are, at this time, suffering from divers complaints and disorders, and that, unless steps are taken to combat and cure these ailments,
CROWDS OF PEOPLE will be prevented, by reason of indisposition, from taking part in the Coronation ceremonials and festivities.

Now Therefore this notice is issued in order that all persons suffering from Biliousness, Sick-Headache, Impaired Digestion, Liver or Kidney troubles may not omit, wisely and in time, to profit by that most excellent remedy—BEECHAM'S PILLS. The benefits to be derived from a course of Beecham's Pills cannot be over-estimated, and the extraordinary success which this unrivalled medicine has everywhere achieved for upwards of fifty-seven years is proof positive of the worth of these pills.

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God Save the King.

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